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# ASIA-PACIFIC GOVERNANCE WATCH

April 2022, Issue 222

**UNPAN-AP**  
Editorial Department,  
RCOCI





# Asia-Pacific Governance Watch

April 2022, Issue 222

UNPAN-AP Editorial Department, RCOI

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## 1、 Government Policy and Legislation

### East Asia

#### **CHINA: Issuing Guideline on Establishing Unified Domestic Market**

China has released a guideline on accelerating the establishment of a unified domestic market that is highly efficient, rules-based, fair for competition, and open. China aims to promote the efficient circulation and expansion of the domestic market, foster a stable, fair, transparent, and predictable business environment, and reduce market transaction costs. It further aims to boost sci-tech innovation and industrial upgrade and cultivate new advantages for participating in international competition and cooperation, said the guideline, jointly issued by the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council. Efforts will be made to improve a unified property rights protection system, implement a unified market access system, and optimize a unified social credit system. The guideline underscored promoting the interconnectivity of market facilities, including building a modernized circulation network, improving the exchanging channels of market information, and upgrading the transaction platforms. China will work to develop a unified domestic market of productivity factors and resources, including land, labor, capital, technology, data, energy, and the environment. The guideline stressed the establishment of unified market regulatory rules and comprehensive improvement of the market regulatory

capabilities. It called for strengthened anti-monopoly efforts and crackdown on practices of unfair competition.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 04/10/2022

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## **China Considers Draft Law to Protect Fertile Black Soil**

Chinese lawmakers are deliberating a draft law to protect the fertile black soil in the country's northeastern provinces, amid efforts to ensure food security and protect the ecosystem. The draft law was submitted for its second reading on Monday to a session of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, China's top legislature. The black soil, or chernozem soil, found in China's northeastern provinces of Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning and in some parts of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, produces about one-quarter of the country's total grain output, meaning it is key to China's food supply. But years of excessive reclamation have eroded its nutrients and the chernozem layer is thinning, which threatens the country's ecological security and sustainable agricultural development. To safeguard grain security, the draft law requires the black soil to be applied to growing "farm produce including grain, oil crops, sugar crops and vegetables."

Strict protection must be provided for the black soil that has been designated as part of the country's "permanent basic farmland" to ensure stable grain yields and quality, the draft law says. While calling for efforts to prevent damage to the black soil, the draft law also urges rural market entities of all ownership types to make frugal and reasonable use of the black soil and promote agricultural standardization to increase the soil's output. The country should encourage the participation of social capital and protect the rights and interests of those investing in the protection of the black soil, according to the draft law. Its first reading took place in December 2021. China has since been soliciting public opinions on the law.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 04/18/2022

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## **China Mulls Law Revision to Promote Sports Among Juvenile**

Education and sports departments, schools, and parents should organize and guide juveniles to participate in sports to prevent and control myopia and obesity, according to a draft revision to China's Law on Physical Culture and Sports. The draft has been submitted to the ongoing session of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, China's top legislature, for a second reading. Students should spend at least an hour on sports at campus every day, said the draft, stressing that other courses should not replace the physical class. The document also encouraged setting up sports teams and clubs on campus to carry out diverse sports activities among students. Schools should hold at least one sports game each academic year,



and the country should hold nationwide athletic games for students at regular intervals, said the draft. It also called on schools to hire outstanding retired athletes to teach sports and called for establishing accidental injury insurance for students in sports.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 04/18/2022

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## **China Adopts Law on Futures and Derivatives**

Chinese lawmakers on Wednesday voted to adopt a law on futures and derivatives to better protect investors' interests and develop the futures market in favor of the real economy. The law, to take effect on Aug. 1, 2022, was approved at a session of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, China's top legislature. China's financial derivatives market, one of the largest in the world, requires a law specifically made for its regulation, said Li Zhengqiang, a researcher at the University of International Business and Economics. China's futures market posted record-setting trading volume and turnover in 2021, which stood at 581.2 trillion yuan (about 90.8 trillion U.S. dollars) and over 7.5 billion lots, respectively, data from the China Futures Association showed.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 04/20/2022

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## **China Revises Law to Promote Vocational Education**

Chinese lawmakers on Wednesday voted to adopt a revision to the Vocational Education Law at a session of the National People's Congress Standing Committee. The revision stipulates that vocational education is as important as general education and notes that the country should advance reform and improve the quality of vocational education. Based on the need for industrial layouts, China should vigorously develop new vocational education majors for advanced manufacturing, according to the revision. The revised law encourages enterprise participation in vocational education. It promises to award the enterprises for industry-education integration and deepening cooperation with schools. To improve the recognition of vocational education, the law calls for measures to raise the social status and treatment of technical personnel. It also calls for vocational skills competitions for technical talents to show their skills. The revision orders the country to optimize the use of education expenditure to ensure the budget for the development of vocational education. The document also encourages domestic enterprises, public institutions, social organizations, individuals, and organizations and individuals abroad to donate to support vocational education development. The revised law will take effect on May 1.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 04/20/2022

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## **Guidelines Adopted at Meeting on Deepening Reform**

Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, president of the People's Republic of China, chairman of the Central Military Commission and director of the Central Commission for Comprehensively Deepening Reform, presided over the 25th meeting of the commission for deepening reform on Tuesday. Five documents were adopted at the meeting. They include Guidelines on Building a Digital Government, Guidelines on Further Promoting Fiscal System Reforms at and below the Provincial Level, Guidelines on Establishing Sound Index Systems for Auditing and Appraising Leading Officials on Their Responsibility for Natural Resource Assets before They Leave Office, Work Plan for Optimizing Financial Support Mechanism for Innovation during the 14th Five-year Plan Period (2021-2025), and Guidelines on Improving Incentive Mechanism for the Development of Science and Technology. While chairing the meeting, Xi stressed the importance of fully implementing the national cyber development strategy, extensively applying digital technologies to government management and services, and enabling the government to function in a more digital and smarter way, thus offering solid support for modernizing China's system and capacity for governance.

Fiscal relationship between governments at and below the provincial level should be straightened out for a more rational balance between power and responsibility, more standardized revenue division, relatively balanced distribution of fiscal resources and stronger fiscal security at the primary level. Efforts are needed to accelerate the construction of an integrated national market, ensure equitable access to basic public services, and boost high-quality development. Following the principles of abiding by laws and rules, being fair and objective, making sound identification, ensuring a correspondence between power and responsibility and holding to account on a permanent basis, we will establish a sound, standard, rational audit and evaluation index system to ensure leading officials fulfill their responsibilities for natural resource assets management and ecological conservation and environmental protection. We should focus on the weak links in financial services for science and technology innovation, and improve the financial support system for innovation, so as to better adapt the financial system for the needs of science and technology innovation in the new era.

It is crucial to develop cutting-edge technologies, focus on economic growth, meet the country's critical needs, and ensure people's security and health. We will inspire scientists and researchers to commit themselves to their mission, concentrate on research and create value. We will foster an innovation ecosystem that encourages scientific and technological breakthroughs and facilitates their application. By doing so, science and technology personnel can tap their full potential. Li Keqiang, Wang Huning and Han Zheng, who are members of the Standing Committee of the CPC Central Committee Political Bureau and deputy directors of the Central Commission

for Comprehensively Deepening Reform, attended the meeting. The commission pointed out, building a digital government is an important measure to innovate governance ideas and methods, and is of great importance to transforming government functions and building a law-based, clean and service-oriented government.

Since the 18th National Congress of the CPC in 2012, the CPC Central Committee has made a series of major arrangements to advance the national cyber development strategy and the national big data strategy, achieving progress across the board. It is essential to uphold and strengthen overall Party leadership throughout all our efforts to build a digital government, and maintain the right political direction. We will make meeting people's aspirations for a better life the ultimate goal of building a digital government. Our digital service system should be universal, accessible, smart, convenient, equitable and inclusive so that the public can make fewer visits to government departments to get things done with the help of data. Through digital reform, we will better transform government functions, and coordinate the intensive development, connectivity and interaction of e-government service systems in all fields and sectors.

We will give full play to the role of digitalization in supporting the government in economic adjustment, market supervision, social management, public services and ecological conservation and environmental protection, so that we can build a well-coordinated and effective system for digital performance of duties. We will apply systems thinking and put in place a sound and standardized system for building a digital government. We will promote effective data sharing and orderly development and use of data in accordance with laws and regulations, coordinate the integration of technologies, operations and data, and ensure better coordinated management and services across different levels, regions, systems, departments and operations.

We will never drop guard when it comes to data security, accelerate the establishment of a comprehensive security system for a digital government, and see that the security management responsibilities are fulfilled. Since the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee in 2013, we have been strengthening the top-level design for the reform of the fiscal and tax systems, further promoting the reform for defining administrative authorities and spending responsibilities between central and local governments, clarifying the distribution of revenue between them and advancing the reform of the transfer payments system, stressed the commission. A fiscal relationship between the central and local governments featuring clearly defined powers and responsibilities, appropriate financial resource allocation and greater balance between regions is taking shape.

The commission called for adherence to the Party's centralized and unified leadership, adding that, under the framework of the revenue-sharing system between the central and local governments, the basic principle of improving the fiscal

relationship between governments must be abided by. Administrative authorities and spending responsibilities between governments at and below the provincial level should be clearly defined, so should the revenue relationship between those governments. The system of transfer payments between them should be improved, the mechanism for adjusting their fiscal systems refined, and their fiscal management standardized. By improving the fiscal systems, regional protectionism will be eliminated, market barriers removed, and support mechanism and standards system for constantly promoting equitable access to basic public services improved.

Fiscal support for old revolutionary base areas, border areas, ethnic minority areas and under-developed areas will be increased, regional support policies improved, and a long-term mechanism for ensuring county-level governments' basic funding established. Risk prevention responsibilities of local governments at all levels must be fulfilled, a long-term mechanism for preventing and defusing hidden debt-related risks should be improved, any increase in hidden debt must be halted, and illegal bond issuance and fund raising strictly dealt with. Financial discipline must be tightened up, financial order maintained, and accounting oversight improved.

The practice of auditing natural resource assets under their auspice when leading officials leave their posts, which was piloted in 2015 and applied nationwide in 2017, has served as a strong institutional tool for promoting ecological conservation, according to the meeting. Work should be done to improve the assessment standards on officials' decisions concerning resources and environment, as well as on the supervision of their performance. Progress on the implementation of the CPC Central Committee's important arrangements, such as natural resource protection, the red lines for ecological protection and farmland protection, pollution and carbon emissions reduction, and the designation of river and lake chiefs, should be included in the evaluation criteria. The weight of indices and methods of assessment should be set up in a systematic way, highlighting the guiding role of key indicators such as the quantity of natural assets in physical terms and the quality of ecological environment, as well as obligatory resource and environmental indicators set in national plans.

The index setting must be scientific and precise, and regional disparities in terms of natural resource endowment and functional zoning should be taken into account. While its scope and content being standardized, the auditing should be based on lawfully verified facts to ensure that its findings stand the test of time. By integrating various mechanisms, audit results will be made an important reference for the performance assessment of officials, as well as their appointment, removal, reward or punishment. Effective measures should be taken to ensure the authenticity, accuracy and integrity of relevant materials and data, while those who cheat in resource and environmental data must be strictly held to account. The commission stressed the need to improve the financial support system for innovation at a faster pace. Efforts should focus on key areas such as making breakthroughs in core

technologies in key fields, the application of scientific and technological advances, the sci-tech and innovative small and medium enterprises, as well as new- and high-tech enterprises.

The supply-side structural reform in the financial sector should be deepened, while loan services for the science and technology sector promoted. Development and policy financial institutions should play a larger role in serving scientific innovation within the defined scope of their duties, and financial institutions in the banking sector should enhance their capacity in serving enterprises undertaking major national tasks in scientific innovation. The direct financing function of the multi-level capital market should be improved, the risk-sharing role of the insurance and financing guarantee institutions should be enhanced, and more external assistance be extended to the financial sector to help support scientific innovation. We must keep in mind the worst scenarios and adhere to a problem-oriented approach, focus on safeguarding the security and stability of industrial and supply chains, strike a balance between financial support for scientific innovation and financial risk prevention, and see that the risk control responsibilities of relevant parties are fulfilled, the meeting said.

Incentive measures are important for promoting scientific and technological innovation, playing a major role in tapping potential and unleashing vitality for innovation, according to the meeting. We will encourage science and technology personnel to reinforce patriotism and dedicate themselves with greater purpose and sense of responsibility to boosting China's strength and self-reliance in science and technology at a faster pace. Both material and intellectual incentives should be provided, to reward, in particular, those groups and individuals who keep in mind the country's immediate and long-term needs and make great contributions to scientific and technological progress, economic and social development, and national strategic security. New mechanisms for organizing and managing research projects will be employed to ensure that our science and technology personnel can concentrate their time and energy on doing research and innovation without distraction.

Support for young scientists and engineers will be increased to give them more opportunities to take on greater responsibilities, so that a favorable atmosphere will be created for young sci-tech talent to come to the fore. Mechanisms for steadily providing funding to scientific and technological research will be refined to ensure continued support for research personnel so that they can fully commit themselves to basic research and public-interest research. At the same time, we will place equal emphasis on providing incentives and imposing constraints, and set up an effective constraint and oversight mechanism. Members of the commission attended the meeting and leading officials of relevant central authorities were also present.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 04/20/2022

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## **Chinese Premier Signs Decree Unveiling Revised Regulation on Place Names**

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang has signed a State Council decree unveiling a revised rule on the management of place names. The new rule, with 44 items in seven chapters, aims to further improve the regulation on the names of places, the State Council said in a statement. The new regulation requires strict management over the naming and renaming of localities and sites and, in the meantime, demands efforts for cultural protection in this regard. It will come into effect on May 1. A State Council executive meeting on Sept. 1, 2021, adopted the revision.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 04/21/2022

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## **China Continues to Advance Concrete Measures to Uphold Authority of Constitution**

China has adopted concrete measures over the past decade to uphold the authority of the country's constitution, ensuring that all laws and regulations are in strict compliance with it, a Chinese official said Monday. The measures include fixing a National Constitution Day, implementing the system of pledging allegiance to the constitution and advancing constitutional compliance inspection, said Xu Anbiao, deputy head of the Legislative Affairs Commission of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee. Xu added that to increase the prominence of the constitution across the board, China designated Dec. 4 as the National Constitution Day in 2014, and a series of publicity campaigns and other activities were hosted. In addition, since 2016, all Chinese officials are legally bound to swear public allegiance to the constitution upon taking office. The country has also advanced its inspection of constitutional compliance, Xu noted. It has been clearly stipulated that any law, regulation, judicial interpretation and policy involving the understanding, implementation and application of the constitution ought to be inspected by the NPC Standing Committee for compliance.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 04/25/2022

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## **China Accelerates Legislation, Improves Legal System in Past Decade**

In the past decade, China has diverted much effort to improving its legislation and enhancing its legal system. At a Monday press conference, officials from governmental departments involved in legislation looked back on the country's achievements in this regard. Over the past decade, China has seen a series of new laws adopted. According to Xu Anbiao, deputy head of the Legislative Affairs

Commission of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), 68 new laws were enacted by the NPC and its standing committee. With laws in different fields enacted, China's legal system has been reinforced. Most notably, the country adopted the Civil Code in May 2020 to better protect the people's legitimate rights and interests. In addition, with the people's participation in law-making increased and their voices better considered, China's legislation fully adheres to the principle of whole-process people's democracy. Also, legislation has been streamlined with improved mechanisms, boasting higher efficiency.

### **HIGHLIGHTING THE CONSTITUTION**

China has adopted concrete measures over the past decade to uphold the authority of the country's Constitution, ensuring that all laws and regulations are in strict compliance with it. According to Xu, not only did China designate Dec. 4 as the National Constitution Day, it has also made it mandatory for all officials to swear public allegiance to the Constitution upon taking office. It has been clearly stipulated that any law, regulation, judicial interpretation and policy involving the understanding, implementation and application of the Constitution ought to be inspected by the NPC Standing Committee for compliance.

### **SAFEGUARDING NATIONAL SECURITY**

China has put in place a legal Great Wall to safeguard national security by instituting new laws as well as revisions to the existing ones in this regard, said Tong Weidong, an official with the Legislative Affairs Commission. More than 20 laws directly related to national security have been formulated or revised since the 18th CPC National Congress in late 2012, said Tong. Among these laws, the new National Security Law enacted in 2015, plays a leading, comprehensive and fundamental role. Apart from it, laws on counter-espionage, anti-terrorism, cybersecurity, biosecurity, nuclear safety and other fields were either enacted or revised.

### **FACILITATING DEVELOPMENT**

In the past decade, China's legislation has evolved to suit to the circumstances. Aiming to address the most pressing problems the country faced in its development, a number of laws and regulations have been enacted and revised. The Law on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), enforced in 2020, is a prime example in this regard. It has ended chaos in the HKSAR and brought the Hong Kong society back on the right track, said Yang Zhaoye, head of the research office of the committees of Hong Kong and Macao basic laws under the NPC Standing Committee. Environmental protection is another area where legislators underscore in their work. Apart from incorporating the concept of ecological civilization into the Constitution, seven related laws have been formulated and 17 such laws have been revised in the past decade, said Xu. The laws formulated and revised cover nearly all aspects of environmental protection, including combating air pollution, water pollution and the protection of forests and

wetlands, Xu added.

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## **China Makes Progress in Environmental Legislation over Past Decade**

China has improved its legislation for environmental protection over the past decade, including by incorporating the concept of ecological civilization into its Constitution, an official with the country's top legislature said on Monday. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in late 2012, seven laws have been formulated and 17 laws have been revised, Xu Anbiao, deputy head of the Legislative Affairs Commission under the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, said at a press conference. The Environmental Protection Law was revised to protect the ecological environment with the strictest possible systems and rule of law, the official said. Xu noted the efforts in improving the legal system for pollution prevention and control, including revising the Law on the Prevention and Control of Air Pollution, the Law on the Prevention and Control of Water Pollution and the Law on the Prevention and Control of Environmental Pollution Caused by Solid Waste, and formulating the Law on the Prevention and Control of Soil Pollution and the Law on the Prevention and Control of Environmental Noise Pollution. In terms of resource protection and utilization, Xu highlighted the revision of the Forest Law and the formulation of the Wetlands Protection Law. He also noted the promulgation of the Yangtze River conservation law, China's first legislation targeting a specific river basin. The task of legislation remains arduous, the official said, adding that a draft Yellow River protection law and a draft law on black soil conservation are currently under deliberation.

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## **China to Intensify Policies to Stabilize and Boost Employment, Further Smooth International and Domestic Logistics**

China decided on greater policy support for keeping payrolls stable and boosting job creation, in a bid to maintain employment stability and ensure stable economic performance, according to a decision made at the State Council's Executive Meeting chaired by Premier Li Keqiang on Wednesday. The meeting also heard reports on the work of ensuring smooth transport and logistics and urged greater efforts to unclog bottlenecks and make circulation unimpeded. The meeting noted the crucial role of stable employment in helping keep major economic indicators within the appropriate range. More robust measures must be adopted to keep employment stable. "Now we need to place greater importance on stabilizing employment. The new round of COVID flare-ups has hit employment quite hard. More forceful



measures will be taken to enable the early resumption of full-capacity production of enterprises on the basis of sound COVID-19 control.

It is particularly important to ensure the normal operation of key enterprises in the industrial and supply chains, transport and logistics enterprises, enterprises for COVID response and ensuring supply and key infrastructure. Point-to-point assistance will be provided to those facing massive difficulties," Li said. The meeting called for dedicated efforts to support market entities in keeping their payrolls stable. Policies to temporarily defer premiums payment for old-age insurance, unemployment insurance and workers' compensation will be expanded from the catering, retail, tourism, civil aviation, highway, waterway and railway transportation industries to all micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and self-employed households facing COVID-induced difficulties in their operations. The proportion of refunding unemployment insurance premiums for MSMEs and self-employed households that make no or minimal cuts to staff numbers will be increased to as high as 90 percent.

Localities will be supported to implement time-limited discounts on electricity consumption for industries in special difficulty, and broadband service and dedicated internet service provided for MSMEs at concessional rates on an ongoing basis, to lower costs for seeking employment, starting businesses or working from home. Enterprises can negotiate with employees to adopt flexible work hours to stabilize jobs. Healthy development of the platform economy will be advanced to boost job creation. "We must make dedicated efforts to support market entities and keep employment stable. At the same time, we must do whatever possible to boost job creation, especially for key groups such as college graduates," Li said. College graduates will be supported to start their own businesses. Policies supporting business start-ups and innovation will be implemented. The program to provide young people including college graduates with one million internship openings will be pushed forward, and subsidies given to enterprises that provide such internship opportunities.

A batch of projects such as farmland irrigation and water conservancy and rural roads will be launched, and public works programs extended, to increase job opportunities for migrant workers. Greater efforts will be made to ensure sound employment services and meet people's basic needs. Support measures such as deferred repayment of student loans and interest reduction and exemption will be explored. Unemployed migrant workers that joined the scheme less than one year ago will receive provisional living allowances. Temporary assistance will be provided to people who lost their jobs due to the COVID impact, live in difficulty, and have not joined the scheme. Local governments are required to meet their responsibilities for stable employment, and their work in this respect will be included in their performance-based assessments. Localities should implement policies creatively to achieve the employment target set for the whole year.

The meeting noted that transport and logistics are like the veins of a market economy, and provides strong underpinning for meeting people's basic needs. Regarding the recent clogs in freight logistics in some regions, the State Council has set up a working mechanism. The COVID response and smooth transportation and logistics will be better coordinated. Inter-agency coordination and cross-regional collaboration will be strengthened to further smooth international and domestic logistics. "We must maintain smooth transportation and logistics. This is crucial to sustaining stable overall economic performance and ensuring people's well-being. This work should take a key place on our agenda," Li said. The meeting required efforts to ensure the efficient running of trunk traffic network. Toll stations and service areas along expressways should stay open to the greatest extent possible. Transportation of goods to and from airports and ports will be unclogged. Platform and delivery enterprises will be supported to scale up their transport capacity.

Micro-circulation for logistics will be kept smooth. Support will be provided for outlets including express service points shut down due to COVID to resume operation and for delivery men to return to work in an orderly manner. Rural roads will be kept open and smooth. Transportation of agricultural supplies and farm produce will be guaranteed. Intensified efforts will be made to ensure logistics in key regions and for key industries and enterprises. Transit stations adequately stock with emergency supplies need to be fully harnessed, to ensure the transportation of daily necessities, goods of key enterprises in the industrial and supply chains, and exports and imports. "We must remove the bottlenecks hindering the last mile delivery in the logistics of industrial and supply chains and daily necessities. The trunk transport network needs to be open and smooth, and their branch lines also need to have smooth circulation," Li said. Support and assistance for freight transport businesses will be stepped up.

Value-added tax will be exempted on eligible revenues generated from express delivery services starting May 1 till the end of the year. An 100-billion-yuan re-lending quota will be in place as quickly as possible to support financing for transport, logistics and warehousing industries. Deferred payment of auto loans will be supported as appropriate. It is imperative to issue as many travel permits as necessary. Quick application and issuance and inter-regional recognition of travel permits will be realized nationwide. Free COVID-19 tests and antigen tests for truck drivers during transportation will be provided. "We must have clear focuses and ensure smooth logistics. Fiscal, taxation and financial departments need to increase relief and support for employees in transport and logistic sector," Li said.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 04/27/2022

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## **China Further Specifies Prosecution Standards on Economic Crimes**

China issued a revised regulation Friday further specifying standards for registration and prosecution of economic crimes under the jurisdiction of public security organs. The revised regulation, formulated by China's Supreme People's Procuratorate and the Ministry of Public Security, covers 78 kinds of economic crimes. It will come into force as of May 15. Systematic revisions were made covering cases involving securities and futures, intensifying crackdown on such crimes. The criteria for determining criminal liability regarding duty-related crimes now apply to both state and non-state employees: a case shall be filed if the value of money or property involved exceeds 30,000 yuan (about 4,554 U.S. dollars).

From <http://www.news.cn/> 04/29/2022

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## **JAPAN: New Law Aims to Reduce Plastic Use**

A law requiring businesses in Japan to cut down on disposable plastic items went into effect Friday. The law applies to retail shops, hotels, restaurants and other businesses that provide 5 tons or more of single-use items per year. They must now either charge for plastic items, or offer alternatives made from other materials. Convenience store chain FamilyMart will no longer give plastic forks to customers who purchase food items. Customers can request bamboo chopsticks instead. FamilyMart estimates that making the change at its outlets across the country will reduce plastic waste by 260 tons a year. The Imperial Hotel in Tokyo will be offering toothbrushes, razors and hairbrushes with bamboo or wooden handles, among other changes. The hotel operator says the costs for amenities will be nearly three-fold what they are now, but it expects to cut the use of plastic items subject to the law by more than 80 percent.

From <https://www.newsonjapan.com> 04/02/2022

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## **Japan Enacts Law to Allow SDF to Engage in Foreigner-Only Rescues**

Japan on Wednesday enacted a law to allow the Self-Defense Forces to conduct rescue missions for foreign nationals only, after Tokyo failed to evacuate many of its local embassy staff in Afghanistan following the Taliban's return to power last August. The House of Councillors passed a bill to remove a restriction in the law on SDF operations limiting the rescue of non-Japanese individuals to those accompanying Japanese citizens. When Afghanistan fell to the Taliban after the United States began pulling out its troops in spring last year, the SDF was dispatched to evacuate around 500 people, including local employees of the Japanese Embassy and the Japan International Cooperation Agency. But the SDF was able to rescue only a dozen local people due to the legal restrictions, spurring criticism and calls for revision of the legislation.

The revised law will also allow the use of SDF transport planes in a broader range of missions, in a shift from the principle that the use of government aircraft should be prioritized for evacuation. Prior to the revision, the SDF could carry out evacuations only from a "safe place," but the Japanese government will now be able to undertake such missions so long as it "takes measures" to avoid danger based on discussions between the defense and foreign ministers. During the Afghan evacuation operations, SDF personnel could not venture outside a local airport that was deemed a safe place under the law. Many evacuees failed to reach the airport on their own due to strict Taliban checkpoints and deteriorating security conditions. Japan's Cabinet approved the bill in early February, and the House of Representatives passed it in mid-March.

From <https://japantoday.com> 04/14/2022

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## Japan Eyeing New Regulations on Smartphone OS Providers

A Japanese government panel stressed the need Tuesday to discuss ways to ensure fair competition in the smartphone operating system market, possibly including enacting new regulations. The government's council on digital market competition pointed out in an interim report that the smartphone OS market has been dominated by Apple Inc. and Alphabet Inc.'s Google LLC and that unilateral rule changes by them may cause serious damage to app providers and other businesses. The smartphone OS market is currently occupied by Apple's iOS and Google's Android, leaving users with virtually no alternative but to use the U.S. technology giants' app stores and internet browsers. The council said that the government will consider ways to prohibit acts that could have a negative impact on competition, without being bound by limits under current regulations. Possible regulatory options will include ensuring thorough disclosure of information on OS and other rule changes by tech giants, the report said.

From <https://www.nippon.com> 04/26/2022

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## SOUTH KOREA: To Lift All Social Distancing Rules, Except Mask Mandate PM

South Korea will lift all social distancing rules, except a mask mandate, next week, Prime Minister Kim Boo-kyum said, marking the first time all restrictions have been lifted since the pandemic began two years ago. Starting Monday, restaurants, cafes and other small businesses will be able to operate freely without a curfew, while the limit on the size of private gatherings will be removed. Currently, such businesses are allowed to open until midnight, and private gatherings are capped at 10 people.

From <https://en.yna.co.kr> 04/15/2022

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## **S. Korea to Ramp Up Policy Support for Electric, Hydrogen Cars**

South Korea plans to invest 397.5 billion won (\$318 million) in building charging stations for electric and hydrogen-powered vehicles this year in an effort to foster the next-generation car industry, a senior government official said Tuesday. The government also plans to focus on building the infrastructure and developing technology for self-driving vehicles this year, according to First Vice Finance Minister Lee Eog-weon. "The government will continue to craft policy support for the next-generation car sector in a bid to help sharpen the industry's competitive edge and take the lead in the global market," Lee said during his visit to a research center of leading automaker Hyundai Motor Co. in Hwaseong, south of Seoul. The country designated the non-memory chip, bio-health and next-generation vehicle sectors as key three industries that it aims to nurture for job creation and innovation-driven growth. The government earlier said it plans to provide more support for zero-emission cars in an effort to help the country better achieve its greenhouse gas emission goals. South Korea aims to raise the total number of eco-friendly vehicles to 4.5 million units by 2030, including 3.62 million EVs.

From <http://www.koreaherald.com> 04/26/2022

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## **National Assembly Passes Controversial Bill on Prosecution Reform**

The ruling party-dominated National Assembly on Saturday passed one of two controversial bills on prosecution reform amid strong protest from the main opposition party, heralding bipartisan standoff down the road. For the past weeks, the Democratic Party (DP) has vowed to pass the two bills on prosecution reform which would immediately deprive the prosecution of all investigative powers. Early this week, the ruling party railroaded the legislation through the judiciary committee and said it would pass the bills at the plenary session "without fail." The DP holds 171 out of 300 seats, compared with the main opposition People Power Party (PPP)'s 110 seats. The two parties reached a compromise on the bills, a breakthrough between the rival parties that had sparred fiercely for weeks over the DP's headlong push for legislation.

But the PPP backtracked on the deal after it drew unexpectedly strong criticism from the public that lawmakers colluded to shield themselves from prosecution investigations, as the agreement calls for excluding crimes related to elections and public officials from prosecution probes. The ruling party claimed that the PPP broke its promise when it demanded a review of the compromise deal. President-elect Yoon Suk-yeol, a former top prosecutor who is set to take office on May 10, earlier voiced concerns about the bills, calling for the entire political community to reflect deeply on what is right in order to defend the Constitution and protect the people. The prosecution has lambasted the reform bills and said it was reviewing an option to

file a constitutional suit and seek a court injunction to suspend them if they are passed in a plenary parliamentary session.

From <http://www.koreaherald.com> 04/30/2022

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## South-East Asia

### **MALAYSIA: Constitutional Amendments for Anti-Party Hopping Bill Tabled**

KUALA LUMPUR: The much-anticipated amendments to the Federal Constitution were tabled in the Dewan Rakyat today paving the way for the Anti-Party Hopping Bill to be tabled at a later date. Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Parliament and Law) Datuk Seri Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar who tabled the bill during a special session today, said a select committee will further deliberate the proposed constitutional amendments. He also said the decision to defer voting on the constitutional amendments was made following a meeting between Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob and Pakatan Harapan's top leadership this morning. He said the anti-party hopping bill is expected to be tabled in the Dewan Rakyat in the next sitting from July 18 to Aug 4. The current sitting was originally supposed to deliberate the anti-party hopping law itself, but the bill, which has already been delayed by more than a month, is now set to be further delayed pending more consultations with political parties.

The bill was initially supposed to be tabled on March 21, but Ismail Sabri postponed the tabling until today. However, on April 6, the cabinet decided that the bill needed more work and hence only the constitutional amendment bill on the "enabling clause" is to be tabled today. "The bill seeks to amend Article 10 of the Federal Constitution by inserting Clause 3A after Clause 3. The proposed Clause 3(A) will allow the enactment of laws that ban elected representatives in Parliament and the state assembly from switching allegiances," he told the house today. This means the freedom which is present is also subject to curbs under Clause (1) of the article for matters of security, public order and morality have been expanded to cover political association. "This amendment also provides a clause to enable a specific act to prohibit Members of the House of Representatives to change parties, to be enacted and approved in Parliament." He said the decision to defer voting on the constitutional amendment was made following a meeting chaired between Ismail Sabri and Pakatan Harapan's top leadership this morning. He said a meeting between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob and Pakatan Harapan leaders had agreed on specifications on the interpretation of prohibitions levelled on lawmakers in terms of party hopping.

Wan Junaidi also said that the bill proposed the repeal of Clause 6 of Article 48 of the Constitution and any other amendments to the federal law deemed necessary.

Clause 6 of Article 48 for instance stipulates that an MP or state assemblyman who resigns shall be disqualified from contesting as a member of the House of Representatives for a period of five years effective from the date of resignation. "The bill also proposes the enactment of a specific law relating to the prohibition of members of the Dewan Rakyat from changing parties. "This matter will be submitted for the discussion and consideration of the Select Committee to be appointed by this House." He reiterated the law had to be amended as the Federal Court in 1992 ruled that any ruling which requires elected representatives who switch parties to vacate their seat as being in breach to an individual's freedom of association stipulated under Article 10 (1) (c) of the Federal Constitution. Wan Junaidi said this based on the case involving Kelantan's Sungai Penang assemblyman Nordin Salleh who in 1990 joined Umno after securing the seat under the Semangat 46 banner, triggering a political and legal crisis.

"The bill would be the first step to the enactment of laws that would prevent party-hopping and protect the rights of voters. Besides that, it would also stop elected reps from switching parties with no reasonable grounds, while ensuring the political stability of the country." "I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the fact that since the 14th General Election (GE14), the country has been confronted with political unrest. "In that time, the PM changed thrice and up to 39 representatives party hopped. This is a clear sign that national democracy is at an unhealthy and worrying level." He said the inclusion of the bill was also part of the truce that was inked between the government and the opposition in their memorandum of political stability in September last year. Wan Junaidi also said that on Sunday the government had agreed that a bi-partisan Select Committee be established, with the membership of all stakeholders including academic experts, ruling and opposition party representatives, to scrutinise and determine the best policy and provisions.

Wan Junaidi said since November last year 12 engagement sessions were conducted by the ministry, with political parties and academics. A public survey involving 7,500 respondents and 110 MPs had also been carried out. Policy and cases on incidents of party-hopping laws on the subject introduced in Commonwealth Countries such as India, Singapore, New Zealand and the United Kingdom were also studied before a presentation was made to party leaders and engagement sessions held with members of the Senate and Dewan Rakyat. Speaker Tan Sri Azhar Azizan Harun said the matter would be debated and Ismail Sabri was expected to deliver his winding-up speech at 5pm before voting is held. Due to the urgency of the bill and some 60 people scheduled to debate the bill, the house also agreed not to break for lunch today.

*From <https://www.nst.com.my/> 04/11/2022*

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## **VIETNAM: To Amend Inadequacies in Land Law**

It is urgent to amend the Land Law, which has revealed obstacles hindering the business activities of enterprises, according to experts in a workshop in Hà Nội late last week. The workshop was held by the Central Institute for Economic Management (CIEM), the National Assembly Economic Committee, and the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry VCCI, to collect business opinions on amendments to the 2013 Land Law. Đặng Đức Anh, deputy director of CIEM, said it was a key law having a significant impact on the business investment environment of Việt Nam, land was an essential input of production, and a land management mechanism that was transparent and efficient would enhance productivity and competitiveness. However, he said the Land Law 2013 had gradually revealed inadequacies that hindered the business activities of enterprises, saying it was “urgent to amend the Land Law”. To serve the amendment, the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) has surveyed business opinions on the matter. Đậu Anh Tuấn, head of the VCCI's Legal Department, said the survey showed 50 per cent of businesses have difficulties with procedures for land and site clearance, 48 per cent have problems with systems for construction planning, and more than 40 per cent have issues with appraisal and approval procedures.

Tuấn raised several significant problems such as limited access to and accumulation of land, unfeasible capital contribution with land use rights, and inadequacies in land use rights. Land valuation and administrative procedures are too troublesome to most businesses, mainly the small and medium-size ones, accounting for more than 80 per cent of the enterprises in Việt Nam, he added. Tuấn said: “VCCI has carried out many studies on the issue and found out the most conflicts related to producers of land, construction, real estate investment.” “Enterprises do not know which procedure goes first, which procedures follow, and there is an overlap of administrative procedures of land in many agencies in Việt Nam.” Chairman of Everland Investment Joint Stock Company, Lê Đình Vinh, said: “There are overlaps and problems between the Law on Land, the Law on Housing and the Law on Investment, which causes huge waste for investors and slows the real estate market.” A VCCI representative also said the current State land price bracket was only 20-30 per cent of the market land price in the city and about 30 to 60 per cent of the market land price in the provinces, and there was no clear and transparent land price calculation mechanism. This created a risk of disputes in compensation for site clearance.

Nguyễn Quốc Hiệp, chairman of GP Invest, said his firm has had a real estate project stuck in Phú Thọ Province since 2008 because of “entanglement” in regulations on compensation coefficient for site clearance. Hiệp said that as the compensation coefficient set by Phú Thọ was 4-6 times lower than in neighbouring provinces, some people refused to leave their land for the project while the firm was not allowed to raise the coefficient by themselves. Therefore, GP Invest’s project at a full scale of 50ha has stayed unfinished for 12 years, adding the slowness of the project was not



the fault of the provincial government but rather the complicated legal mechanism. Nguyễn Quốc Hùng, the Vietnam Bankers Association general secretary, mentioned several problems that need to be solved in the revised Land Law. Hùng said the regulations on land use regime, rights and obligations of investors/transferees in resort real estate projects were not clear enough. Hùng also said under the law, the properties attached to land had not been recorded on thland use right certificate, so it was difficult for the bank to grant loans to businesses. Hùng proposed to add assets attached to the land on the certificate of land use rights so that the ownership of houses and other properties was attached to land in the revised law. Tuấn from VCCI said: “The amendment of the Land Law this time needs to be closer to reality, and there needs to be coordination in amending related administrative procedures to create consistency and convenience for investment procedures in the future.” In a recent report at the 9th session of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Trần Hồng Hà, said that his ministry was completing the revised Land Law while the National Assembly would have a first session in May and a second session in October 2022.

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 04/04/2022*

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## **Action Programme on Economic Restructuring for 2021-25 Issued**

Deputy Prime Minister Lê Minh Khái signed a resolution dated April 12 issuing the Government’s action programme to implement the National Assembly’s resolution on economic restructuring plan for 2021-25. Resolution No 54/NQ-CP sets the target of revamping the growth model and improving productivity, quality, competitiveness, self-reliance, adaptation and resilience of the national economy. Accordingly, labour productivity is projected to grow more than 6.5 per cent annually, and the gap of national competitiveness with ASEAN-4 (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, and Thailand) will be narrowed by 2025, especially in terms of institutions, infrastructure and human resources. Spending on scientific research and technological development will be no less than one per cent of GDP, and the number of enterprises engaging in tech reform should increase by 15 per cent each year during the 2021-25 period. The country strives to have some 1.5 million enterprises, of which 60,000-70,000 are medium and large-sized firms. The private economic sector is expected to contribute around 55 per cent of GDP. At least five national products are projected to win international brands.

Among 35,000 co-operatives set by the end of 2025, more than 3,000 will utilise high technology in production and consumption, and 50 per cent of agricultural cooperatives set up connectivity with businesses in value chains. To fulfill the targets, the resolution specifies major tasks and solutions, with the first group of tasks focusing on restructuring public investment, State budget, credit organisations and public non-business units. For public investment restructuring, the Government has

assigned the Ministry of Planning and Investment to coordinate with ministries, agencies and localities to outline measures to raise the quality of institutions on public investment management and improve the economy's capacity of absorbing investment. The Government also plans to build policies and solutions to push ahead with decentralisation, promote the responsibility of agencies and their leaders, and address obstacles to public investment management.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Finance and other ministries and agencies will work on a project on reforming mechanisms for State budget management and allocation, which will be submitted to competent agencies for approval, along with other relevant policies. The State Bank of Việt Nam (SBV) will coordinate with ministries, agencies and localities to consolidate institutions in monetary, credit and banking sectors, making them match market principles and operate in a healthy and stable fashion. The project on restructuring credit institutions and handling bad debts for 2021-25 should be submitted to the Prime Minister for issuance this year. Another group of tasks set in the resolution is to develop the financial, land and labour markets, and improve the efficiency of the allocation and use of human resources. A financial strategy by 2030 will be developed and sent to the PM for issuance this year. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Development will take the main responsibility for building a draft law amending and supplementing some articles of the 2013 Land Law and making a report to the Government before the document is submitted to the NA for adoption this year. The third group of tasks target corporate development, connectivity between enterprises of different economic sectors, and the reform and development of the collective economy and cooperatives. The resolution also highlighted the tasks of urban economic development, regional connectivity and the restructuring of sectors towards modernity and green, sustainable growth.

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 04/15/2022*

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## **Feedback Given on e-Commerce Taxation Draft**

The proposed regulations that require e-commerce platforms to pay tax on behalf of individual sellers are at odds with other regulations on personal income, leading to double taxation and asymmetric effects on e-commerce actors. This was the feedback of the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) on a draft amending Decree 126 on taxation and Decree 123 on invoices and bills. The VCCI has rejected the regulations, citing Article 24 of the Law on Personal Income Tax, which stipulates that individuals who have taxable incomes must make tax declarations, pay tax into the State budget and make tax finalisation for all their income. Article 29 of Decree 65 on personal income tax was also invoked to show that resident individuals must declare and pay income tax on business activities directly to tax offices. Accordingly, the chamber urged lawmakers to clarify the inconsistency between the proposed regulations and existing legal documents to clear up confusion.

VCCI also believed the regulations that require e-commerce platforms to act as tax representatives of sellers are ambiguous since the regulations do not define the basis from which representative rights are established and the scope of responsibility. The chamber was concerned that collecting the tax would double tax individuals who conduct online and brick-and-mortar businesses. This could be the case because online incomes would be deducted for tax by e-commerce platforms, whereas tax authorities collect offline incomes on a presumptive basis. "Unfortunately, it is quite difficult to separate online incomes and offline incomes of a single business location, raising a possibility that the individuals are double-taxed," the VCCI explained. VCCI also believed the draft would produce asymmetric effects on e-commerce actors as it shifts the burden of tax declaration and tax payment from sellers to e-commerce platforms. Meanwhile, social network sites do not have to bear such a burden because they fall outside the scope of the draft, putting them at an advantage. The VCCI finally suggested the draft apply to cross-border e-commerce platforms as much as domestic platforms to create a level playing field for all e-commerce actors.

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 04/19/2022*

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## **Suspension of Health Declarations Under Review by Ministry of Health**

The Ministry of Health (MoH) announced on Friday that it will review the temporary suspension of domestic health declaration protocols that are active during the pandemic. This move is to enable citizens to travel more freely in the country. According to the MoH, data has optimistically shown that the COVID-19 pandemic is currently under control in Việt Nam. The number of daily cases has fallen 20 times compared to the peak in mid-March. With less than 8,000 cases per day, this is the lowest daily case number in Việt Nam since the Omicron variant emerged in the country. Daily deaths have fallen ten times, while severe cases have fallen five times. "As we are not doing contact tracing anymore, we are going to cease using health declarations," said Nguyễn Thanh Long, Minister of Health, "This is one of the first steps toward normalcy." In case of the emergence of new variants or unusual developments of the pandemic, health declaration protocols will return and the MoH will notify specific provinces and cities. Earlier on Wednesday, the MoH issued a suspension on health declarations for people entering Việt Nam. This comes after the sharp decline in Việt Nam's and worldwide COVID cases and deaths. The World Health Organization (WHO) however, urges people to stay vigilant of COVID-19, citing the emergence of new variants that could complicate the current situation. The WHO's General Director Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus warned that countries are "downplaying the threat" of the virus since the total test figures are declining. Although the number of weekly deaths worldwide is the lowest since March 2020, lower test figures would mean that the WHO will get less data on the virus and make it harder to track the changes and evolution of SARS-CoV-2.

## South Asia

### **INDIA: Cabinet Amends Mega Power Policy to Give More Time Limits to 10 Projects**

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the time extension to identify 10 provisional mega-certified projects for furnishing the final mega certificates to the tax authorities. The committee, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has extended the time period to 36 months in order to enable developers to competitively bid for future PPAs and get tax exemptions as per Policy terms. The increased liquidity will boost the overall growth of the country and also ensure the revival of various stressed power assets. The time period for the 10 provisional mega projects which are commissioned/partly commissioned for furnishing the final mega certificates to the tax authorities has been extended to 156 months from the date of import. "During this extended period, bids for firm power (combination of intermittent renewable energy, storage and conventional power) will be invited in coordination with the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE) and Solar Energy Corporation of India Limited (SECI). These Mega projects will be expected to participate in such bids to secure PPAs," the government said in an official press release. The Ministry of Power will also develop an alternative in this period, based on present electricity markets while ensuring that benefits are passed onto consumers in a competitive manner.

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### **Cabinet Approves Extension of Atal Innovation Mission till March 2023**

The Union Cabinet approved continuation of Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) till March 2023. The Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, said, "The mission shall work on its intended target of creating an innovation culture and entrepreneurial ecosystem in the country through various programs." The mission aims to establish 10,000 Atal Tinkering Labs (ATLs), 101 Atal Incubation Centers (AICs) and 50 Atal Community Innovation Centers (ACICs). Its intended targets also include supporting 200 startups via the Atal New India Challenges. The government will spend over Rs. 2,000 crore in the process of the establishment and supporting the beneficiaries. "With continuation approval, AIM assumes an even greater responsibility to create an inclusive innovation ecosystem, marked by innovation and entrepreneurship," said the Cabinet. The Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), set up under the NITI Aayog, creates and promotes an ecosystem of innovation and entrepreneurship across the country via interventions at school, university, research

institutions, MSME and industry levels. Also, the mission has emphasised on infrastructure creation and institution building.

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## **OIL Inks Incubation Pact to Promote Hydrogen Mobility Solutions in Northeast**

Oil India Limited (OIL) signed an Incubation Agreement with the Start-up firm – Ohm Clean Tech Private Limited on Thursday for hydrogen mobility solutions in Northeast India. “The start-up will focus on design, integration and development of 9-M Hydrogen Fuel Cell powered e-Bus, and a Liquid Organic Hydrogen Carrier (LOHC) solution,” said the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas. The start-up will be mentored and nurtured under IIT-Guwahati. Sushil Ch. Mishra, CMD, Oil India Ltd, said, “OIL is committed to the development of path breaking technologies in the field of clean energy. It is now sponsoring this start-up venture in the complementary fields of hydrogen storage, transportation and mobility solutions.” Harish Madhav, Director Finance, Oil India Ltd. Said, “OIL sponsors eligible start-ups under its scheme “SNEH” (Start-up Nurturing, Enabling & Handholding).” OIL is presently incubating six start-ups from all over the country working on various hi-tech fields like robotics, instrumentation, biotech and fuel delivery solutions.

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## **IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw Emphasises Need for Stricter Norms on Cybercrime**

Union Minister of IT and Electronics Ashwini Vaishnaw, in the Lok Sabha session on December 8, highlighted the need for tighter regulations to deal with cybercrimes. The Minister emphasised the need to have “a lot of discussions and a broader consensus” on bringing “stricter norms” for over-the-top (OTT) platforms to check the telecast of movies and shows that cause disharmony among various communities and religions. During the question hour, Vaishnaw said, “This subject of cybercrimes, the way it is affecting our children, actually there is a need to have a consensus for making much tighter regulation. There is no doubt about it.” Wherever the government makes an attempt to tighten cyber laws even a little, the members here start shouting that it is an attack on democracy and people’s right to freedom, he added. Congress member Hibi Eden raised the issue of cybercrimes and children becoming victims of cyberbullying. He was of the view that the existing cyber laws were “quite weak” to deal with the problem and asked the IT Minister if there was a specific instruction from the ministry to increase the awareness level of officials in various government departments on cybercrimes. Answering a question on making stricter censor norms for OTT platforms. Vaishnaw said, “Across the world, people are really worried where the entire cyber world is heading because of the way social

media intermediaries have become all-pervasive today. So the point that the member has raised today needs a broader consensus, not only in India but across the world. We need to have lots of discussions and a broader consensus in our society for this.”  
(With inputs from PTI)

From <https://egov.eletsonline.com/> 04/30/2022

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## Central-West Asia

### **AZERBAIJAN: Adopting New State Standard for Food Safety**

BAKU, Azerbaijan, April 12. On the basis of the international standard ISO 22000:2018, a new standard AZS ISO 22000:2022 'Food safety management systems – Requirements for any organization in the food chain' has been adopted in Azerbaijan, the State Service for Antimonopoly Control and Supervision of the Consumer Market under Azerbaijan's Ministry of Economy told Trend. The draft standard was approved by the Azerbaijan Standardization Institute, a public legal entity subordinated to the State Service for Antimonopoly Control and Supervision of the Consumer Market, and included in the State fund of normative documents on standardization. The application of the standard will contribute to food safety and quality management, will bring the activities of organizations involved in the food chain in line with international requirements, as well as will improve the quality of food.

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### **KYRGYZSTAN: President Signs Decree to Improve Creative Economy**

President of Kyrgyzstan Sadyr Japarov has signed a decree on measures to develop a creative economy and establish conditions for the progressive development in Kyrgyzstan, the press office of Kyrgyzstan's president said. The UN General Assembly declared April 21 the World Day of Creativity and Innovation (Creative Economy). In addition, 2021 has been declared by the United Nations as the International Year of the Creative Economy for Sustainable Development. In this regard, this Decree is of particular relevance, the administration of the president reports. According to the Decree, a creative economy is one of the priorities of the state policy of Kyrgyzstan which will develop innovative processes in the economy, create new opportunities for entrepreneurs and jobs, increase export earnings, and labor productivity and create a platform for advanced developments. The President decided to adopt the concept of creative economy development in Kyrgyzstan, determine the classification of creative industries and establish creative industries parks. In addition, until October 1, 2022, a package of normative legal acts aimed at

the development of creative industries, as well as the functioning of the Creative Industries Park should be developed, the press office of the president said.

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## **UZBEKISTAN: Adopting New Law on Organic Products**

Uzbek authorities adopted a new law on organic products, Trend reports via Uzbek media outlets. This law regulates the production, processing, storage, transportation, labeling and marketing, as well as conformity assessment and authorization of organic products. According to the law, subsidies are provided for the production of certified organic products, taking into account the specifics of growing crops. The registry of organic producers is maintained and posted on the official website of the Ministry of Agriculture of Uzbekistan.

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## **Oceania**

### **AUSTRALIA: Greens Unveil Plan to Lower Retirement Age Back to 65**

Retirement could come sooner for more than half a million Australians under a new Greens proposal. The plan involves returning the retirement age to 65 from 67 years by 2026 and granting everyone earlier access to the age pension. That means expanding access to the pension to hundreds of thousands of older Australians currently living in poverty, the party says, and provide an earlier retirement with guaranteed income support. The announcement comes in addition to the Greens promising to raise the pension rate to \$88 a day. Both major parties have failed low-income older Australians since the Labor government increased the pension age by two years in 2009, the Greens say. Leader Adam Bandt says if the Greens are successful at the May election they will use their leverage to advocate for older voters and the working class. "In balance of power, the Greens will fight to restore respect and dignity in ageing and ensure that it's rest and revitalisation, not poverty, awaiting people at the end of their working years," he said. "By making billionaires pay their fair share of tax, older Australians can retire earlier with dignity." The plan is expected to cost nearly \$5.6 billion over the forward estimates period.

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### **NEW ZEALAND: Two Million Flu Shots for COVID Winter Plan**

The Government is ramping up the flu vaccination campaign which starts today, with 40 per cent more flu shots available this year as part of the COVID-19 winter plan.



New Zealand usually uses about 1.4 million flu vaccines a year. This year, the Government is making two million available and is widening eligibility for people to get vaccinated for free. “With the Omicron wave still working its way through the country, we need to protect our most vulnerable from getting the flu as well, and our health system from coming under more pressure,” Health Minister Andrew Little said. “We already make the flu shot available for free for everyone over the age of 65, and for those who are pregnant or at risk of becoming seriously ill because of other underlying conditions. “This winter, on the advice of doctors, we’re widening eligibility to include Māori and Pacific people aged 55 and over, which means an extra 39,000 people can have the vaccine for free.”

Andrew Little urged as many people as possible to get the vaccine. “In an ordinary year, flu kills more than 500 New Zealanders. And this is no ordinary year,” he said. “Every year, about half the people eligible for free vaccination take it up. For the past two years, with the country closed to the rest of the world because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we’ve been largely free of colds and flu. “That’s changing, though, with our borders opening, and I encourage everyone – and especially the most vulnerable – to get vaccinated. Anyone who is part of Group Three for the COVID vaccination rollout should make sure they get a flu shot. “The programme is being rolled out across the country from today, with vaccinations available from family doctors, pharmacists and some Māori and Pacific health providers. “We’re looking at ways to increase the vaccination workforce to get flu shots to those who need them. We have trained and authorised many new pharmacist vaccinators over the past two years, including provisional pharmacist vaccinators who are able to administer the influenza vaccine.” The \$12 million expansion programme is being funded from the Government’s COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund.

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 04/01/2022

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## **Everyday Workers Take Centre Stage as FPAs Bill Passes First Reading**

Stories from the frontline of our some of New Zealand’s most critical workforces were front and centre as the Government’s Fair Pay Agreement Bill passed its first reading today. “At the heart of the Government’s economic recovery plan is people. We know when we invest in New Zealanders, they have greater opportunities to prosper, provide for their families, and contribute to our nation’s success,” Michael Wood said. “Today we heard from workers on how our current employment system isn’t working. Over the course of Covid we have been reminded of the fact that some of our most essential workers like cleaners, drivers, and retail workers, are some of the most under-valued in our labour market. As we rebuild from Covid, it is the right time to tackle some of these long-term inequalities in our country

“Fair Pay Agreements level the playing field by enabling employers and unions to



negotiate a basic floor under the pay and conditions of workers in a sector. This will be critical in stopping the 'race to the bottom' we have seen in many sectors, which can see good employers undercut. "Importantly, FPAs will shift the focus from competition based on low labour costs and instead will incentivise a focus on those things we know to improve productivity and our economic performance including skills and training, innovation, and the provision of better goods and services. Other countries with sector based bargaining, like Australia, have seen both higher wages and higher productivity than New Zealand over the past 30 years. "Fair Pay Agreements have long been one part of our wider work programme focused on lifting the wages of those on low to medium incomes – ensuring better wages for employees is even more essential now as we begin to feel the global economic pressures caused by the war in Ukraine. "Fair Pay Agreements were a 2020 Labour manifesto commitment, which we have extensively consulted on, taking a balanced approach to the final design," Michael Wood said. The Bill will go through a full Select Committee process and is expected to pass all stages this year.

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## **New Report Confirms the Case for Emissions Reduction Plan**

Minister of Climate Change James Shaw says the latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is clear: we need a plan now to cut our emissions. The report notes that 83 per cent of net growth in greenhouse gases since 2010 has occurred in Asia and the Pacific – and that New Zealand, Australia and Japan, as a group, had some of the highest rates of GHG emissions per capita in 2019. The latest insights from the IPCC are clear and the case for action couldn't be any stronger or more urgent," James Shaw said. "As a country that relies on our environment for so much, addressing climate change isn't a nice to have, it's essential. "Our Emissions Reduction Plan, which will be published next month, will set out how we will reduce emissions across every sector of the economy.

"Over the last four years the Government has taken more climate action than in the previous three decades combined. And those actions have lowered the future trajectory of our emissions, but we must go further to get us on the path to net-zero," said James Shaw. The IPCC report – which focuses on the prevention of further warming – says both domestic action and international co-operation are essential if we are to reduce emissions and prevent a catastrophic increase in global temperature. "The severity with which we will experience climate change can be lessened if we do all we can, right now, to limit warming. "The challenge ahead may feel daunting, but the report also highlights a number of effective and innovative ways we can lower emissions and limit the effects of climate change. And that is exactly what our Emissions Reduction Plan will do at a national level.

"Our climate targets are not optional, they are critical – the Emissions Reduction

Plan will set out how we are going to achieve them, and what we must all do to make it happen. “There are those who will try and tell you, when it comes to climate change, New Zealand is too small to be counted – this report should well and truly dispel us of that notion. We are part of the problem and we must be part of the solution,” said James Shaw. New Zealanders will also be asked this month how the country can adapt to the climate change that is already unavoidable through the release of the draft National Adaptation Plan for consultation.

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## **New Zealand to Support Further Collective Action by IEA**

New Zealand will voluntarily release more of its emergency oil stocks as part of additional action by International Energy Agency (IEA) member countries in response to the ongoing global impact on energy security as a result of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, says Energy and Resources Minister Dr Megan Woods. A special meeting held in the early hours of this morning (Sat NZT) of the 31 members of the IEA agreed to take collective action to release additional barrels of oil from global emergency stocks to help offset the loss of Russian oil exports after sanctions were imposed on the nation following the invasion. The size of the release will be disclosed early this week. “The size of our contribution will be determined in the coming days by the IEA, but New Zealand released 369,000 barrels of oil last month as its part of the initial collective action to release 60 million barrels held by IEA members,” Megan Woods said.

“New Zealand’s membership of the IEA requires it to hold stocks equivalent to at least 90 days of net oil and imports. New Zealand buys emergency reserve stocks that are held offshore as part of this obligation and help to manage potential disruptions in the oil market. “We released slightly more than our allocated share in response to the last collective action and New Zealand again stands ready to play its part to help stabilise world energy markets. “There has been a great deal of volatility in global oil markets since the invasion and this further action, coupled with the United States’ move to release 180 million barrels of oil over the next six months, will help to provide some certainty to the market,” Megan Woods said.

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## **Government Taking Action to Reverse Environmental Decline**

The Environment Aotearoa 2022 report released today shows the Government’s plan to turn around decades of environmental decline and make New Zealand carbon-neutral is more urgent than ever, Environment Minister David Parker said. “Our environment is at the heart of who we are as a country. It sustains our economy and is core to our identity as a people, but for too long we haven’t protected it and

this report highlights the urgency of turning around the decline,” David Parker said. “While most of the data in this report pre-dates actions we have taken to reverse decades of environmental decline, it nevertheless underscores the necessity of our plans to clean up our environment for current and future generations. “The Government has work underway across water, climate, biodiversity and more that directly addresses many of the issues raised in today’s report.”

In the most significant change to the management of freshwater since the 1991 Resource Management Act, the Government’s Essential Freshwater reform package was put in place to address the degradation of the country’s lakes, rivers, wetlands and estuaries. “Having swimmable and drinkable water is a birth right of every New Zealander, that the Government is working to restore,” David Parker said. “We are focused on implementing real change as quickly as practicable. The freshwater reforms aim to make material improvements to water quality within five years and to restore our waterways to health within a generation.” The Government’s National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 sets minimum national bottom lines across key measures of freshwater health. It lays out the pathway to restore our waterways in both urban and rural areas. Councils have until the end of 2024 to notify regional plans that implement the NPS-FM.

The Jobs for Nature programme, which aims to boost nature-based jobs, training and environmental benefits while accelerating COVID-19 recovery, is making a strong impact. “With more than 7,000 jobs created and more than 380 projects funded, progress so far is pleasing and includes over four million plants going into the ground and over 1,300 hectares of freshwater areas being restored,” David Parker said. “Through the creation of nature-based jobs we are creating enduring benefits for our freshwater and biodiversity, mitigating the impact of climate change, and protecting cultural values, like gathering kai.” Climate Change Minister James Shaw said the report emphasises the critical need for urgent climate action. “We need to see bold, enduring action to cut emissions right across Aotearoa. The actions taken by this Government have changed the trajectory of our emissions, but there is much more work to be done.

“New Zealand’s emissions reduction plan, to be released next month, will provide a comprehensive suite of actions and initiatives to cut emissions across every part of Government and every sector of the economy. It will put Aotearoa on a pathway to net-zero. “The report casts the impacts of climate change into sharp relief. Our glaciers are retreating, and areas of our coast are increasingly subject to rising sea-levels. New Zealand’s response to the climate impacts we cannot avoid will be addressed in our first National Adaptation Plan – a draft plan will be released for feedback soon. “A collective commitment to change is the only way we can build a low-carbon, equitable future, and to ensure the wellbeing of all New Zealanders and our environment for generations to come,” James Shaw said.

Among the many serious concerns identified in the report is the fact that our rare ecosystems and indigenous species are under threat, including 94 percent of reptiles and nearly three-quarters of terrestrial birds at risk of becoming extinct. “The report paints a picture of a stark reality in which the time to take action on our environment and make sustainable long-term decisions is now – before irreversible damage is inflicted,” David Parker said. “This is the time to act, and we know what needs to be done. The Government is committed to leading the all-of-society response required.”

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## 50 Projects Fast-Tracked Under Govt Scheme

The Government has approved three more projects under the fast-track consenting process, bringing the number of projects that are eligible to apply for resource consents to 50. The COVID-19 Recovery Fast-track Consenting Act 2020 is a key Government lever to grow the economy, boost jobs, speed up infrastructure development and improve environmental outcomes in response to the economic impacts of COVID-19. “I’m pleased to announce NZ Windfarm’s Te Rere Hau windfarm repowering project, near Palmerston North, has been approved as the fiftieth referred fast-track project,” Environment Minister David Parker said. “The other two projects approved are the Waimarie Street project residential development in St Heliers, Auckland, and the Flint’s Park West, Ladies Mile-Te Pūtahi project in the Lake Hayes area, Queenstown.

“To date, the 50 projects referred for approval cover 13 of New Zealand’s 16 regions. “This includes projects from Northland to Wellington and from Taranaki to Bay of Plenty, as well as in Nelson, Canterbury, Otago and Southland. “Together they have the potential to create more than 18,000 jobs and build 8,772 houses,” David Parker said. Seventeen of the 50 projects approved under the fast-track legislation have now obtained consent from an expert panel. These projects are focused on housing, but also include: the Tauhei Solar Farm (Te Aroha); the Ohinewai Foam Factory; the new Whakatane Boat Harbour; the Hananui Aquaculture project (Foveaux Strait); the new Dunedin Hospital, and various other projects expected to promote employment across the regions.

The fast-track process allows for a shorter consenting process that can boost employment and economic recovery but does not replace or circumvent the environmental tests under the Resource Management Act 1991 and is designed to ensure Treaty of Waitangi and Treaty settlement obligations are maintained. The Minister for the Environment has declined to use the fast-track process for some proposals where public input using the existing RMA processes was considered more appropriate. “Approval for projects under the fast-track consenting process provides a significant reduction in the time taken to apply for resource consents as well as provide the job and economic benefits that the act was designed to provide.

“Applicants using the fast-track process have saved, on average, 15 months per project,” David Parker said.

Work is being done on whether some form of the fast track process is carried forward into the new resource management system but no decision has been taken. Details of the latest projects approved: Project schedule 48 – Waimarie Street, St Heliers, Auckland This residential development project will create approximately 58 residential lots accommodating approximately 58 residential units in (predominantly) terraced houses between 2 and 3 storeys high, and associated infrastructure including a pedestrian access way to Waimarie Street, vehicle access ways and parking areas, and infrastructure for three-waters services Project schedule 49 – Flint’s Park West, Ladies Mile – Te Pūtahi This project is a medium-density housing development in the Lake Hayes area, Queenstown. The project is to subdivide an 18.4-hectare site and construct approximately 315 residential units (or approximately 180 residential units, a church/chapel and a state-integrated school), supporting infrastructure and public open space, on 8.6 hectares of the land.

Project schedule 50 – Te Rere Hau windfarm The Te Rere Hau windfarm repowering project will redevelop and expand the existing Te Rere Hau wind farm in the Tararua Range south-east of Palmerston North. The project will involve removing 97 existing 2-blade, 47-metre-high turbines, installing 30 new 3-blade, 162-metre-high turbines and constructing associated infrastructure. Notes to editor Projects are considered under the fast-track process in two ways: those listed in the Act or those referred by the Minister for the Environment (and jointly with the Minister of Conservation if in the coastal marine area) through an order in council.

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## Next Steps in Declaration Plan

“We’ve now completed the first stage of the two-step engagement process to develop a Declaration Plan. This has provided us with valuable feedback to help with drafting a Declaration Plan that we will then take out to wider consultation,” Willie Jackson said. Almost 70 targeted engagement workshops were held mainly online. Māori rōpū represented diverse groups ranging from iwi, hapū, tāngata whaikaha Māori (disability community) and rangatahi, to groups interested in health, education, and the environment. “The drafting of the Declaration Plan will now commence and will be undertaken in partnership with the National Iwi Chairs Forum’s Pou Tikanga and the Human Rights Commission over the next couple of months before being shared for public consultation later this year.

“All New Zealanders will get the chance to comment on the range of actions proposed in the draft Declaration Plan. There is already a lot of mahi across Government underway that is consistent with UNDRIP, but having a plan sets a

roadmap of actions to steadily work towards and measure progress against. “As stated previously, He Puapua is not the Declaration Plan, nor is it Government policy. Reports like He Puapua and Matike Mai are part of a long history of reports on addressing Indigenous rights in Aotearoa and should be seen in that context. “The Declaration Plan will not just be about co-governance either. In fact the feedback has been that there are many ways we can strengthen indigenous rights and achieve better outcomes for all that aren’t about governance at all.

“We’ve already made positive strides to improve Māori health and housing outcomes and as a Government we are focused on what works and what will fix the issues important to Māori, so the plan needs to be practical. “For example there are some innovative iwi-led housing initiatives which are making a huge difference in communities and the revitalisation of te reo Māori is another area this Government has supported which aligns with UNDRIP. “We’ve seen how Māori-led solutions to COVID-19 have been successful, including in improving vaccination rates and providing food supplies to our most vulnerable, and the Māori Health Authority will have an ongoing role in reducing poorer health outcomes for Māori. “Working in partnership on a Declaration Plan that strives for a more equitable reality for all whānau and communities is an important kaupapa which I believe New Zealanders will be proud to be a part of,” Willie Jackson said.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted in 2007 and supported by NZ in 2010. It includes a broad range of rights and freedoms. NZ is committed to improving Māori outcomes and is developing a Declaration plan to measure our progress in addressing Indigenous rights here. Read more on the Te Puni Kōkiri website. There were 12 key themes from the Māori targeted engagement covering areas such as rangatiratanga, participation in government, equity and fairness. It ran from Sept 2021 to Feb 2022 and some engagement is ongoing.

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## 2、 Government System and Civil Services

### East Asia

#### **CHINA: Top Court to Improve Property Rights Protection for Smaller Businesses**

China's top court will further improve the property rights protection mechanism for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to address their concerns and provide a legal guarantee for high-quality socio-economic development. The Supreme People's Court (SPC) will standardize judicial compulsory measures and strictly prevent the infringement on the legitimate interests of MSMEs in due

procedures, said SPC official Huang Wenjun at a press conference Tuesday. The SPC has redoubled its support for the inclusive financing for MSMEs and its protection for fundraising activities by MSMEs. In 2021, people's courts nationwide concluded 258,000 cases related to MSMEs, involving an amount of over 56.79 billion yuan (around 8.9 billion U.S. dollars). The SPC has further refined the mechanism for market entities to exit the market and the mechanism to rescue eligible market entities from bankruptcy. In the first quarter of this year, people's courts nationwide concluded 83 cases related to MSMEs bankruptcy and restructuring, which helped 70 enterprises pull through, retaining over 40,000 jobs, Huang said.

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## **Xi Stresses Enhancing Digital Gov't Construction, Advancing Fiscal Reforms**

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Tuesday stressed efforts to enhance the building of a digital government and advance fiscal system reforms at and below the provincial level. Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks while chairing the 25th meeting of the central commission for deepening overall reform. The meeting reviewed and adopted several guidelines on the above-mentioned issues, along with other guidelines on establishing a criteria system for the auditing of outgoing officials on the management of natural-resource assets, and enhancing the incentive mechanism for the scientific research community, as well as a work plan on improving financial support for innovation. Xi stressed efforts to fully implement a national strategy for building China's strength in cyberspace, urging broad application of digital technology in government management and services. Digital and intelligent operation of the government should be promoted to offer solid support for the modernization of the national governance system and governance capability, Xi said.

On local fiscal system reforms, Xi noted that fiscal relations between governments at and below the provincial level should be straightened out to enable a more rational balance between power and responsibility, a more standardized division of revenue, a relatively balanced distribution of fiscal resources, and stronger fiscal security at the primary level. He called for speeding up the construction of a unified domestic market, promoting the equalization of basic public services and advancing high-quality development. On establishing a criteria system for the auditing of outgoing officials on the management of natural-resource assets, Xi said such a system must be scientific, standardized and reasonable to encourage officials to fulfill their responsibilities on natural-resource asset management and ecological protection. He also urged focusing on the weak links in financial services for sci-tech innovation, and improving the financial support for innovation, so as to ensure the



financial system better meets the needs of sci-tech innovation in the new era.

To encourage scientific and technological personnel to reach their full potential and show their capabilities, Xi called for building an innovation ecology that is conducive to the continuous emergence of achievements and effective application of research outcomes. Li Keqiang, Wang Huning and Han Zheng, who are members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and deputy heads of the central commission for deepening overall reform, attended the meeting. While providing digital services that are accessible, intelligent and inclusive, the country should give play to the important role of digital technology in economic regulation, market supervision, social management, public services and ecological conservation, according to the meeting. In building a digital government, the country needs to promote the sharing and use of data in accordance with laws and regulations, and push forward technological, business and data integration, the meeting said. It also stressed the importance of data security in digital management, calling for efforts to ramp up security management in all aspects.

Since the third plenary session of the 18th CPC Central Committee, the country has strengthened top-level design for fiscal and tax reform, with the division of revenues between central and local governments further clarified and the reform of the transfer payment system further deepened, the meeting said. Efforts should be made to clearly define fiscal powers and expenditure responsibilities, clarify the division of revenues, and improve the transfer payment system between governments at and below the provincial level. The country will further remove local protectionism and market barriers, improve the system for ensuring equal access to basic public services, and increase financial support for old revolutionary base areas, ethnic areas, border areas, and underdeveloped areas, it said. China has built a system for auditing outgoing officials' management of natural-resource assets, the meeting noted.

Efforts should be made to improve the standards by which officials' decision-making in matters related to resources and the environment are evaluated, and to include the implementation of the nation's major ecological policies in the evaluation indicators, the meeting said. The meeting also urged efforts to step up building a financial support system for innovation, with focuses on major areas including breakthroughs of core technologies in key fields; the application of advances in science and technology; small and medium-sized sci-tech and innovative enterprises; and high-tech enterprises. The meeting stressed the need to enhance capacity building in terms of credit services in the sci-tech sector. It also called for improving the direct financing function of the capital market and giving play to the risk-sharing role of insurance and financing guarantee institutions. More work should be done to ensure the security and stability of industrial and supply chains, and coordinate the financial support for sci-tech innovation with the prevention of financial risks, the meeting said.

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## **China Lays Out Priorities on Improving Government Transparency**

The General Office of the State Council has released a document laying out the priorities for improving government transparency in 2022. It stresses improving information disclosure related to market entities, cutting taxes and fees, expanding effective investment, and COVID-19 containment. It calls for improving an online database of administrative regulations and strengthening confidentiality examinations of government information disclosure. The document also highlights the need to promote information disclosure, enhance the explanation of policies, and improve responses to public opinion on government affairs.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 04/22/2022

## **Xi's Thought Boosts Global Ecological Governance**

Friday marks the Earth Day 2022 with the theme of "Invest In Our Planet." Not long ago, when planting trees in an annual activity in Beijing, Chinese President Xi Jinping said China has adhered to the notion that lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets to fully promote the development of ecological civilization, advance afforestation and improve the living environment in both urban and rural areas. Under the guidance of Xi's Thought on Ecological Civilization, China has been advancing the green transition of its economy over the years, contributing to global environmental and climate governance. On various occasions, Xi has expounded on his thought and called for concerted international efforts in global ecological governance. The following are some highlights of his remarks in this regard.

### **Oct. 12, 2021**

When addressing the leaders' summit of the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Xi stressed the need to respect Nature, follow Nature's laws, protect Nature, and build a homeland of harmonious coexistence between man and Nature. The development of ecological civilization should be taken as a guide to coordinate the relationship between man and Nature, Xi stressed, adding that human activities need to be kept within the limits of the ecology and environment, and holistic conservation and systematic governance of mountains, rivers, forests, farmlands, lakes, grasslands and deserts need to be carried out.

### **Sept. 21, 2021**

In his speech at the general debate of the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly, Xi said that China will step up support for other developing countries in developing green and low-carbon energy, and will not build new coal-fired power

projects abroad. Xi stressed the importance of improving global environmental governance, actively responding to climate change and creating a community of life for man and Nature. He also underlined accelerating transition to a green and low-carbon economy and achieving green recovery and development.

#### **April 20, 2021**

While delivering a keynote speech via video at the opening ceremony of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2021, Xi called for efforts to strengthen cooperation on green infrastructure, green energy and green finance. Xi also called for improving the Belt and Road Initiative International Green Development Coalition, the Green Investment Principles for the Belt and Road Development and other multilateral cooperation platforms "to make green a defining feature of Belt and Road cooperation."

#### **Dec. 30, 2020**

During a meeting with then German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Emmanuel Macron, President of the European Council Charles Michel and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen via video link, Xi called for speeding up green development, urging China and the European Union to give full play to their high-level dialogue mechanism on environment and climate, and give mutual support to each other in hosting international conferences on biodiversity, climate change, and conservation of nature.

#### **Sept. 30, 2020**

When delivering a speech at the United Nations Summit on Biodiversity, Xi stressed upholding multilateralism and building synergy for global governance on the environment, noting that faced with global environmental risks, countries "share a common stake" and form "a community with a shared future." "Unilateralism finds no support; cooperation is the right way forward," he said. "We must firmly safeguard the UN-centered international system and uphold the sanctity and authority of international rules so as to enhance global governance on the environment." He also stressed upholding the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" for developed and developing countries in tackling the challenges to the environment.

#### **April 28, 2019**

Declaring the opening of the International Horticultural Exhibition 2019 Beijing, Xi expressed his hope that the green development concept embodied by the expo park would be spread to "every corner of the world." "Only with concerted efforts can we effectively deal with global environmental issues such as climate change, marine pollution and biological protection and achieve the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development goals," he said. He put forward a five-point initiative: pursuing harmony between human and Nature, prosperity based on green development, a passion for nature-caring lifestyles, a scientific spirit in ecological governance and joint efforts to tackle environmental challenges.

## **Firmly Pushing Opening-up in Unstable, Uncertain World**

China's resolution to forge ahead with opening-up was reaffirmed in the latest public speech of Chinese President Xi Jinping. "No matter how the world will change, China's faith in and its commitment to reform and opening-up will not waver," Xi said when addressing the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) Annual Conference 2022 on Thursday. A flurry of policies are to ensue, as Boao has been a place to see China walk its talk on expanding high-standard opening-up. Since 2013, President Xi has participated in the BFA annual conferences and delivered keynote speeches five times. Among other key issues, his remarks on opening-up have become all the more relevant as the globe is plagued by protectionism, deglobalization, and the COVID-19 pandemic. This year, the country's renewed opening-up efforts range from fully implementing the negative list for foreign investment, expanding the encouraged investment catalog, improving services for investment promotion, to adding more cities to the pilot program of opening the service sector. A hallmark of China's economy, opening-up has become an indispensable part of the new development philosophy put forward by Xi. Over the past decade, the country has adopted a more active stance to integrate into the globe and opened its door wider. The country set up its first free trade zone in its financial hub Shanghai in 2013 and has established 20 more nationwide. Negative list for foreign investment has been shortened for five consecutive years. High-quality cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has been promoted for mutual benefits.

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement, the world's largest free trade deal with China as one of signing members, came into force on the first day of 2022. As is well-known, openness brings fiercer competition and higher requirements for governance. However, the wider the Chinese economy opens, the more confident the country becomes when interacting with the rest of the world. In his keynote speech made in 2013, Xi envisaged a world of common development. This year, he likened countries around the world to "passengers aboard the same ship who share the same destiny," calling on "all passengers" to pull together for the ship to navigate the storm and sail toward a bright future. "Choosing dialogue and cooperation over zero-sum games, openness and inclusiveness over a closed-door and exclusive approach, and exchanges and mutual learning over a sense of superiority: this is the only choice worthy of the broad-mindedness of Asians," Xi said. From putting forward the BRI to striving to build Hainan into a free trade port, Xi has been pushing the world's second-largest economy to embrace the globalization.

China's adherence to opening-up has not only resulted in its own growth miracles but contributed greatly to the global development at large. "The fundamentals of the Chinese economy -- its strong resilience, enormous potential, vast room for

maneuver and long-term sustainability -- remain unchanged," Xi said in his speech on Thursday. "They will provide great dynamism for the stability and recovery of the world economy and broader market opportunities for all countries." China will press ahead with high-quality Belt and Road cooperation to make it high-standard, sustainable and people-centered, he said. From Malaysia's durian plantation to the Thai-Chinese Rayong industrial zone, from Croatia's wind power project to China-Europe freight trains, the BRI has delivered tangible benefits to people in participating countries.

In a world still reeling from COVID-19, rallying support for openness and building a community with a shared future is more pressing and prominent than ever. Over the past two years, China's economic governance has served as the anchor of stability for the world -- its stable production guaranteeing a lifeline for industrial and supply chains and facilitating global recovery. Championing multilateralism in battling the pandemic, China actively offered vaccines to countries in need, which helped narrow the "immunization gap." Looking ahead, an increasingly open China will play an even greater role in promoting peace and development. China will implement the RCEP in full, seek the conclusion of high-standard free trade agreements with more countries and regions, and actively work for joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement, Xi said on Thursday. "China will unswervingly follow the path of peaceful development, and always be a builder of world peace, a contributor to global development, and a defender of the international order," Xi said.

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## **Chinese Premier Stresses Need to Further Anti-corruption Fight, Build Clean Government**

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang on Monday called for further efforts to combat corruption and build a clean and honest government. Li, also a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, made the remarks at a State Council meeting on clean governance. Zhao Leji, secretary of the CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, and Vice Premier Han Zheng, both members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, attended the meeting. Li said that advancing economic and social development is the basic responsibility of governments at all levels and also an essential requirement for improving Party conduct and building a clean government. The new, increased downward pressure facing China's economy due to the impact of the greater-than-expected changes in the domestic and international situations deserves great attention, he said.

Li stressed that policy initiatives that have already been formulated must be largely implemented in the first half of this year so as to ensure stable jobs, prices, and

supplies, and to keep the fundamentals of China's economy stable. Governments are urged to shoulder their responsibilities to safeguard food and energy security and keep supply chains stable, according to the premier. Li called for further efforts to create a market-oriented, law-based and internationalized business environment, noting that tax and fee reduction policies should be implemented in a fair, equitable and efficient manner. Moreover, the premier stressed the need for greater efforts to oppose pointless formalities, bureaucratism, hedonism and extravagance, with a particular focus on the first two problems.

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## **Xi Calls for Efforts to Build Modern Infrastructure System**

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Tuesday called for all-out efforts to strengthen infrastructure construction in the country's building of a modern infrastructure system. Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks at the 11th meeting of the Central Committee for Financial and Economic Affairs, of which he is the head. Infrastructure serves as a pillar for economic and social development, Xi said, urging the country to coordinate development and security, and optimize the layout, structure, functions and development models of infrastructure. Other Chinese leaders, including Li Keqiang, Wang Huning and Han Zheng, attended the meeting. The meeting heard reports from relevant departments on ramping up infrastructure construction and their progress on policy implementation.

While giving credit to China's achievements in major sci-tech facilities, water conservancy projects, transport hubs, information infrastructure and national strategic reserves, the meeting deemed the country's infrastructure still incompatible with the demand for national development and security. Strengthening infrastructure construction in an all-round way is of great significance to ensuring national security, smoothing domestic circulation, facilitating the "dual circulation" of domestic and overseas markets, expanding domestic demand and promoting high-quality development, according to the meeting. Toward this end, the country needs to bolster the construction of network-based infrastructure in fields such as transport, energy and water conservancy, with efforts made to improve efficiency, the meeting said. China should improve the planning of waterways and the building of coastal and inland ports, and upgrade water transport facilities nationwide, the meeting said, while a smart grid must be developed, a series of new green, low-carbon energy bases built, and the oil and gas pipeline network should be fine-tuned.

Efforts should also go into strengthening the infrastructure construction for industrial upgrades in information, sci-tech and logistics, as well as building facilities for a new generation of supercomputing, cloud computing, AI platforms and broadband networks, said the meeting. A host of regional, general and freight transport airports

will be constructed nationwide, the meeting said, calling for efforts to promote the transport integration of urban agglomerations, build convenient and efficient intercity railway networks, and develop urban railways and urban rail transit. The country needs to promote the modernization of agriculture and rural areas with infrastructure modernization, it said, also stressing the necessity to support national security infrastructure and improve the country's capability to cope with extreme situations.

On increasing financial support for infrastructure construction, the meeting called for broadening the channels for financing and encouraged the participation of social capital in the investment and operation of urban infrastructure. The country should also adhere to its innovation-driven strategy, putting more efforts into the research and development of core technologies to shore up the technological independence of infrastructure construction, the meeting said. In addition, the meeting underscored the contributions made by the Central Committee for Financial and Economic Affairs, saying that it has profoundly studied a variety of major issues concerning the country's fundamental and long-term development, and has played a strategically leading role.

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## **SOUTH KOREA: Key to Successful Digital Platform Government Through Lens of Big Data**

Each time a new presidential administration took office, promises surrounding information technology were repeatedly made in a bid to appeal to the public. The military regime and the Kim Young-sam administration's pledges to foster an information and communications network were followed by the Kim Dae-jung administration's policies to promote venture businesses. President Roh Moo-hyun envisioned the transition to an e-government, Lee Myung-bak outlined an IT convergence plan, Park Geun-hye upheld initiatives to promote transparency of government data and Moon Jae-in worked toward freer access to the internet. The key aspects of the "fourth industrial revolution" -- software, IT, network, cloud, artificial intelligence and the internet of things -- all share a commonality: the use of computers.

Yoon's digital platform government. President-elect Yoon Suk-yeol looks committed to realizing a digital platform government. His vision remains in line with the preceding administrations' pursuits toward digital transformation. Then what would distinguish Yoon from his predecessors in terms of his specific goals and action plans? What legacy would he leave behind as compared to former presidents? Let's take a look at the usage of the word "platform." The term, in general, refers to a railway platform. But in business, a platform is a computer architecture where activities involved in production, consumption and distribution consistently take place. That is, a system that creates value by linking consumers and producers and

facilitating their exchanges. Nowadays the term is not just limited to the online sphere, but is being extended to encompass a broader social ecosystem underlying various sectors.

Particularly in the public sector, the e-government centered around the Ministry of the Interior and Safety and the Ministry of Science and ICT would be the closest we have to an IT platform. It is a platform since it was launched to serve as a system and is still being run that way. Building on South Korea's legacy in having the world's fastest internet connection and the No. 1 e-government for three years since 2010, we will need to remedy our shortcomings and fortify our strengths to develop the platform into an even more advanced one. In lockstep with the global trend towards a digital transformation, we need to lay the groundwork for cloud computing, tap into the metaverse to overcome physical and temporal limitations, and transform the work environment amid the pandemic. We can also make use of big data and AI to improve the government system into a more efficient, safe, and transparent one. Technologies driving the smart industry should be expanded and integrated into the renewed platform.

There is nothing so special about the above proposals. Then what further steps should be taken to animate digital platforms so that they generate more future-oriented, innovative outcomes? In a nutshell, it is data that distinguishes today's digital platforms from the preceding version of an e-government. To do so, it is of utmost necessity to establish a data governance policy that coordinates the aspects responsible for the production, collection, storage and management of data. In other words, policies need to address what data is being produced in each government department and municipality. They need to address who owns the data, how to standardize the data, and to what extent the data should be shared and disclosed. When such policies take root, we will be set to integrate data sources. A standardized and integrated data set can serve as a principal intermediary within and between government agencies and the people. It also allows for transparency in the work process, which helps foster mutual trust and efficient, timely decision-making. A unified data set can even promote new businesses, feeding into a national ecosystem favorable to industrial development.

Another component of a successful digital platform policy is the integration of ordinary people into the platform. Digital technology does not have to exclusively favor conglomerates and tech companies. It can also benefit those dwarfed by these giants: individual merchants, small and medium-sized companies, and just ordinary people. Encouraging those on the sidelines of power to capitalize on digital technologies can help bridge the digital divide. For instance, connecting the government-led digital platform to private-sector platforms can foster entrepreneurship, inviting start-ups and small-sized businesses to take advantage of the integration into a government-centered digital platform. It is also important to nurture IT experts. Fostering talent is essential to realizing diverse digital needs and

to vitalizing the digital ecosystem. Such a policy offers employment opportunities for the youth. However, current policies to cultivate tech talent are not setting the priorities straight. Stuck in the past, they are not fully embracing what the most cutting-edge sectors are calling for. The new administration must work out these unresolved challenges the preceding administrations left behind.

To illustrate some exemplary uses of the platform, a data governance system that coordinates data across government departments and municipalities can contribute to creating a public data catalog service, like an AI secretary. This virtual assistant helps with administrative services, legal affairs, taxation and civil complaints. Specifically, it can serve as a digital AI guide that answers questions, breaks down complex terms for laypeople, and provides consultations on filing complaints. Moreover, the government can launch a personalized data service, called MyData, that provides information on employment opportunities, welfare benefits, tax affairs, lifelong learning, career training programs, and crime prevention services. In order to advance such an application from one that simply explains technical terms to a more full-fledged one that provides actual services, we need to overhaul the traditional e-government system where data was partitioned across disparate departments and municipalities, and develop an easily accessible, one-stop structure called Government as a Service, or GaaS, based on standardized, integrated data governance. Such a transition requires the development of relevant administrative policies and political agreements between data owners and data managers.

The last piece of the puzzle to successfully establish and operate a digital platform is an organization that plans, coordinates and integrates the platform. The currently available options -- the Ministry of the Interior and Safety and the Ministry of Science and ICT -- lack the necessary authority and capability to conduct the role. Moreover, political sensibilities, which bureaucracies fail to provide, are needed to coordinate the responsibilities of departments and to mitigate conflicting interests of municipalities. This is the reason why we need to put in place IT leadership positions -- chief information officer and chief digital officer -- directly under the president's or the prime minister's office. Through consensus and integration, we can establish a shared, coordinated system of data governance based on data created and collected by the digital platform.

Such efforts require a supportive government environment favorable to utilizing collected and aggregated data. By generating diverse and useful data through interfacing with the private sector, we can enhance the value of digital platform services. We can also animate data transaction systems and data-based businesses. One thing to keep in mind when nourishing a platform is that they tend to become dominated by more powerful entities. To prevent this from happening, it is essential to run platforms in an open manner and to consistently monitor activities in order to prevent conflict of interest among those who manage the platform.



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## State Spy Agency Offers Cyberthreat Info to Crypto Exchanges

South Korea's state intelligence agency said Thursday it has started providing real-time information on hacking attempts to the country's major cryptocurrency exchanges amid growing cyberthreats. The country's major crypto exchanges -- Upbit, Bithumb, Korbit and Coinone -- now have access to the agency's information on online security threats, such as the Internet Protocol (IP) addresses of the hacking attempts, according to the National Intelligence Service. It stressed the importance of tackling such threats as they are directly linked to national security and are found in both the public and private sector. "In the future, we plan to provide and share more specialized information, including the latest malicious codes and hacking methods related to virtual assets," the agency said.

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## South-East Asia

### **MALAYSIA: PM Assures PH of Special Parliament Sitting on April 11**

The Pakatan Harapan (PH) presidential council, in a joint statement, confirmed the matter following a meeting between the prime minister and PH leaders earlier today. The joint statement was issued by Opposition Leader and Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Parti Amanah Negara (Amanah) president Mohamad Sabu, Democratic Action Party (DAP) secretary-general Anthony Loke and United Progressive Kinabalu Organisation (Upko) president Datuk Seri Wilfred Madius Tangau. "The PH presidential council gives full commitment that all PH members of parliament will support to pass this Amendment Bill. Besides tabling the amendment bill on anti-party hopping, the special Dewan Rakyat sitting next Monday is also expected to debate on limiting the tenure of the prime minister. However, on April 4, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Parliament and Law) Datuk Seri Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar told the Dewan Negara that the special Dewan Rakyat sitting is subject to the Cabinet's approval. The Cabinet, he said, is expected to meet tomorrow to decide on the matter.

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### **Nomination for PKR Central Leadership, AMK, Women Councils on May 28**

KUALA LUMPUR: The nomination process for 20 Central Leadership Council seats

in the PKR party election which was initially scheduled for Monday, has been postponed to May 28, PKR Election Committee chairman Dr Zaliha Mustafa announced. She said the postponement also involved the nomination for 20 seats in the party's Angkatan Muda Keadilan (AMK) Leadership Council and 20 seats in the Women Council. However, she said the nomination for the six top party posts, namely the president, deputy president and four vice-presidents, as well as five top posts in the AMK and Wanita, will continue to be held on April 11 as scheduled. "The Committee welcomes the input from the party's Political Bureau which convened on April 6 and agrees that the postponement is apt and in line with the polling process which is to be held in conjunction with the National Congress later," she said in a statement here today. Dr Zaliha said the nomination for posts at all branches statewide began today and all elections are expected to be completed on May 20 and the winners to be known by May 21. "Those who win will be the delegates at the National Congress and eligible to vote for the top party posts," she added. The election is expected to see an interesting clash for the deputy president's post as secretary-general Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail and vice-president Rafizi Ramli have confirmed their intention to contest. For the four vice-president's posts, among the names expected to contest are Kapar MP Datuk Abdullah Sani Abdul Hamid, chief organising secretary Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad, Women's chief Fuziah Salleh and Information chief Fahmi Fadzil. Student activist Adam Adli has also confirmed contesting the AMK chief's seat.

*From <https://www.nst.com.my/> 04/08/2022*

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## **Puad Zarkashi Is New Johor State Assembly Speaker**

ISKANDAR PUTERI: Former deputy education minister Datuk Dr Mohd Puad Zarkashi has been appointed as Johor's new State Assembly Speaker. Puad, who is the Rengit assemblyman, was nominated for the post by Menteri Besar Datuk Onn Hafiz Ghazi (BN - Machap) and the nomination was supported by Datuk Zahari Sarip (BN - Buloh Kasap). He was the sole person nominated for the post. Puad, who was also the former Batu Pahat member of Parliament, succeeded Suhaizan Kayat from Parti Amanah Negara. The appointment was made during the first meeting of the first session of the 15th State Assembly at the Sultan Ismail Building here. In his speech, Puad thanked Onn Hafiz for his trust in appointing him as the speaker and expressed his determination to carry out his responsibility with full dedication. "I would also like to remind assembly members of the advice by the Sultan of Johor Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar in his address at the opening of the Fourth Session of the 14th State Assembly who wants all members to discuss and make decisions for the interest of Johor and its people. "Sultan Ibrahim also said that members should not mar this assembly with bad behaviour, as this is an august house (dewan yang mulia), not a monkey cage (dewan sangkar monyet)," said Puad. The meeting then proceeded with the swearing in of the assemblymen who won in the state election last month, led by Onn Hafiz. Semarang assemblyman Datuk Samsolbari Jamali was then

appointed as the Deputy Speaker. Samsolbari, a former state agriculture, agro-based industry and rural development committee chairman, was nominated by Onn Hafiz and his nomination was supported by Zahari.

*From <https://www.nst.com.my/> 04/21/2022*

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## **11,282 Candidates Vying for Central Leadership, Division Posts in PKR Polls**

KUALA LUMPUR: The PKR Selection Committee today finalised the candidacy of 11,282 nominations to contest the central leadership council and divisional level posts in its party polls this year. Its chairman Dr Zaliha Mustafa said the figure included 20 candidates for the central council, including Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who was confirmed as the sole candidate for the PKR presidency, thus keeping the post for a second term. She said the committee received 11,290 nominations for the PKR 2022 election, but eight individuals failed to pass the screening after going through the protest and appeal process. "Objections to candidates were only accepted for around eight people for obvious reasons such as bankruptcy and being blacklisted by the Registrar of Societies. "Congratulations to the 11,282 candidates who passed the screening and qualified to join the final list of nominations, including 20 candidates for the top leadership. "Once again, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has emerged as the sole presidential candidate without any contest," she said in a statement today. The full list of these candidates can be viewed on the Election 2022 website at <https://pemilihankeadilan2022.com/>

Currently, the committee is preparing to hold the physical and online voting phase, which is scheduled to take place from May 13 to 22, for which the circular has already been issued," she added. Based on the PKR election portal, two nominations were received for the post of deputy president: former Pandan member of parliament Mohd Rafizi Ramli and current PKR secretary-general, Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail. Apart from that, 17 candidates will be involved in the tussle to grab four vice-president positions, including Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Amirudin Shari and Anwar's former political secretary, Farhash Wafa Salvador. Also among those nominated for the posts are Negri Sembilan Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Aminuddin Harun; PKR Wanita chief Fuziah Salleh; PKR information chief Datuk Seri Shamsul Iskandar Mohd Akin; PKR organising secretary Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad and PKR communications director, Fahmi Fadzil. Two current vice-presidents, Nurul Izzah Anwar and Tian Chua, are not defending their position nor contesting any posts in the central council. Meanwhile, Zaliha said a total of 96,983 PKR members had registered as online voters for the party's polls on the last day of the registration application yesterday. This included more than 700 party members living abroad in countries such as Australia, Brunei and Singapore. "Any party member who does not have the opportunity can still perform the responsibility of physically voting at the polling station, which will be finalised in a few days," she said.

## **THAILAND: New Chief Appointed to Tackle Emergency Situations at Bangkok Airports**

The Army commander has named a new chief to oversee emergency situations at Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi and Don Mueang airports. Supreme Commander General Chalermphol Srisawat signed the order on Wednesday appointing General Narong Prueksaroongruang as situation commander for the two airports. The order was published in the Royal Gazette the following day. The order states that General Narong, a military specialist attached to the Supreme Command, will oversee all emergency operations at the two airports in case an emergency situation occurs. The commander also appointed General Benjapol Rangsiphanuwat, an adviser to the Supreme Command, and Lt-General Saengsak Lamungthong, a military specialist attached to the Supreme Command, as Narong's deputies. The three officers will be in charge of emergency situations at the two international airports and will carry out operations assigned to them by the prime minister and the Cabinet, the order added. The appointments go into effect retroactively from April 1.

From <https://www.nationthailand.com/> 04/22/2022

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## **Thai Seniors to Get Slightly Higher Allowance for Next 6 Months**

The Cabinet on Tuesday bumped up the monthly allowance for some 10 million elderly Thai citizens for the next six months. Speaking to reporters after the weekly Cabinet meeting, Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha said the government has allocated about 8 billion baht for the new rate, which will go into effect this month. He said the government is concerned that the elderly population will have been indirectly affected by the Covid-19 crisis as their children may not be able to provide enough financial support. "Hence, the government has decided to increase their monthly allowance for six months, so they have a better quality of life," Prayut said. "The government attaches importance to taking care of all groups and we do not want to leave anyone behind in this crisis."

A government press release listed the changes based on ages as follows:

- 60-69: 100 baht extra (700 baht per month)
- 70-79: 150 baht extra (850 baht per month)
- 80-89: 200 baht extra (1,000 baht per month)
- 90+: 250 baht extra (1,250 baht per month)

From <https://www.nationthailand.com/> 04/26/2022

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## **INDIA: IT Ministry Launches Indigenous Intelligent Transportation Systems Solutions for Managing Traffic**

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), under Intelligent Transportation System Endeavor for Indian Cities Phase-II initiative, has launched an indigenous Onboard Driver Assistance and Warning System – ODAWS, Bus Signal Priority System and Common SMart IoT Connectiv (CoSMiC) software. The product was launched last week by Dr Rajendra Kumar, Additional Secretary, MeitY in the presence of Arvind Kumar, GC (R&D in Electronics), MeitY; Dr Satis V Ukkusuri, Purdue University, USA; Prof H P Kincha, Chairman, InTranSE program; Sunita Verma, Scientist-G & HoD, ESDA, MeitY; and Kamlesh Kumar, Scientist-D, MeitY. The product was developed as a joint initiative by the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (CDAC) and the Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT-M). Mahindra and Mahindra was the industrial collaborator for the project. Onboard Driver Assistance and Warning System – ODAWS: With improved highway infrastructure and an increase in the number of vehicles, speed on roads has increased, further exacerbating safety concerns. As per the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), in around 84 per cent of cases, “driver error” was cited as the cause of the accident. This assumes significance in the context of the potential for technology applications for assisting and warning drivers in minimizing driving errors. ODAWS incorporates vehicle-borne sensors for monitoring driver propensity and vehicle surroundings to deliver acoustic and visual alerts for driver assistance. The project involves the development of sub-modules such as the navigational unit, driver assistance console, and mmWave radar sensor. The positional and dynamic characteristics of surrounding vehicles are probed using mmWave radar sensors. The navigational sensor provides a precise geospatial orientation of the vehicle as well as trends in driving behaviour. The ODAWS algorithm is used to interpret sensor data and offer real-time notifications to the driver, boosting road safety.

Bus Signal Priority System: Poor reliability of the public transport system is a major reason for people to opt for personal vehicles. Improving this is essential to attract more travellers to public transport, thus leading to a more sustainable traffic solution. One of the major causes of delays for public transport buses in urban arterials is the delay at signalized intersections. A bus signal priority System is an operational strategy that modifies normal traffic signal operations to better accommodate in-service public buses at signal-controlled intersections. Unlike a blind priority that is given for emergency vehicles, here it is a conditional priority, which is given only when there is an overall reduction in delay for all vehicles. The developed system will enable to minimise personal delay by providing priority to public transport buses, either through Green extension or Red truncation, considering all vehicles approaching a signalized intersection. Common SMart IoT Connectiv (CoSMiC): It is a middleware software providing standard-based deployment of IoT adhering to oneM2M based global standard. It facilitates users and application service providers

in various vertical domains to use application-agnostic open standards and open interfaces for an end to end communication with well-defined common service functionalities complying with oneM2M standard. With this in view, the CoSMiC common service layer is used to interface any vendor-specific standards and for increasing interoperability with the smart city dashboard. The horizontal silo architecture ensures interoperability and data exchange between different IoT devices and applications and avoids vendor lock-in. CoSMiC comply with 12 common service functions which are Registration, Discovery, Security, Group Management, Data Management & Repository, Subscription & Notification, Device Management, Application & Service Management, Communication Management, and Delivery Handling, Network Service Exposure, Location, Service Charging and Accounting. The CoSMiC platform also provides Interworking Proxy Entity (IPE) APIs for connecting non-oneM2M (NoDN) devices or third-party applications to get connected to the CoSMiC platform. CoSMiC provides a Dashboard page showing IoT units, products, applications, and its live data in a Geographical Information System (GIS) map. A secondary data repository is also available for historic charts and reports. CoSMiC provides an end-to-end solution for the seamless connection of IoT devices and applications.

From <https://smartcity.eletsonline.com> 04/11/2022

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## **PAKISTAN: Structural Reforms Key to Accelerating Growth**

After a strong economic rebound in fiscal year (FY) 2021, Pakistan's economic growth is expected to moderate to 4% in FY2022 due to tighter fiscal and monetary policies before picking up again in FY2023, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) said in a report today. According to the Asian Development Outlook (ADO) 2022, ADB's annual flagship economic publication, Pakistan's gross domestic product (GDP) growth is projected to slow to 4% in FY2022 from 5.6% in FY2021 as the government applies measures to reduce the current account deficit, raise international reserves, and cut inflation. Growth is expected to accelerate to 4.5% in FY2023 due to stronger private consumption and investment. "Pakistan's economy is recovering steadily thanks to well-coordinated fiscal and monetary responses to the pandemic," said ADB Country Director for Pakistan Yong Ye. "These led to a remarkable expansion in the industry and services sectors. It is key to continue structural reforms along with appropriate fiscal and monetary policies to contain rising inflation and external imbalances. Comprehensive reforms in tax policy and administration are also critical to boosting revenues in order to fund essential public services. ADB is fully committed to supporting Pakistan's sustainable development."

In FY2022, industrial growth is forecast to decelerate, reflecting fiscal and monetary tightening together with a significant depreciation of the local currency, and upward adjustments to domestic oil and electricity prices. Agriculture is expected to continue lending impetus to GDP growth supported by the government's package of

subsidized inputs and increased support prices of wheat and sugarcane. Inflation declined to 8.9% in FY2021 but is expected to pick up in FY2022 to around 11% due to higher international energy prices, significant currency depreciation, and elevated global food prices from supply disruptions. As a net importer of oil and gas, Pakistan will continue experiencing strong inflationary pressures for the remainder of FY2022 from the jump in global fuel prices resulting from the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Inflationary pressures are likely to be less pronounced in FY2023, with inflation forecast to drop to 8.5% as fiscal consolidation progresses and oil and commodity prices stabilize.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 04/06/2022

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## Central-West Asia

### **KYRGYZSTAN: Plan to Increase Pensions and Salaries of State Employees till End of Year**

Kazakh National Economy Minister Alibek Kuantyrov told the Government meeting about the main economic growth indicators in the first quarter of 2022, Trend reports citing Kazinform. In January-March this year the country's economic growth rates accelerated up to 4.4%. Kuantyrov reported on the growth acceleration in the country's real economy, onward growth in exports, and sustainable growth rates in the service industry. As stated there, growth in the real economy made 5.9%, and business activity increased up to 2.8%. The pace of fixed investment growth made 1.5%. Capital investments, excluding the mining industry, grew by 0.6%. Investments into construction rose by 2.2. times, into education by 2.2 times, public administration and social services by 78.5%. He noted the best indicators were recorded in the city of Shymkent, Akmola, and Pavlodar regions. As earlier reported, this January-February the foreign trade turnover of Kazakhstan increased by 53% to reach USD 18.2 bln. Export grew by 71.4% to stand at USD 12.1 bln. Thereat, the country's processed goods export rose by 47% to hit USD 3.5 bln," Kuantyrov said.

From <https://en.trend.az/> 04/12/2022

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### **TURKMENISTAN: To Review Sectoral Programs**

President of Turkmenistan Serdar Berdimuhamedov at the meeting of the government, ordered to analyze and revise the sectoral programs adopted in different years, Trend reports citing Turkmenportal. At the same time, Berdimuhamedov ordered to prepare proposals for the implementation of sectoral programs in accordance with the Program of socio-economic development of Turkmenistan for 2022-2052. The Head of State also stated that the work on the analysis of sectoral programs and the submission of proposals for their improvement

should take no more than one month. The President noted the need to carry out appropriate work taking into account the long-term programs adopted by the UN.

From <https://en.trend.az/> 04/09/2022

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## **President of Turkmenistan Instructs to Improve Efficiency of Transport Structures**

President of Turkmenistan Serdar Berdimuhamedov instructed to take consistent steps to improve the efficiency of transport structures based on the widespread introduction of advanced technologies, Trend reports via Business Turkmenistan news agency. He stated this at a meeting of the Government of Turkmenistan. After hearing the report of the Director General of the Agency for Transport and Communications under the Cabinet of Ministers Mametkhan Chakyev, the President noted the importance of improving licensing processes in the transport complex, which is justified by the need for comprehensive development of economic relations in modern conditions. In this regard, the Head of state instructed the head of the Agency to keep under control the work carried out in this direction.

From <https://en.trend.az/> 04/27/2022

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## **UZBEKISTAN: Energy Minister Resigns**

By the decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Alisher Sultanov was relieved of the post of Minister of Energy in connection with his transfer to another job for health reasons, Trend reports citing Kun.uz. It should be recalled that in February 2019, former Deputy PM Alisher Sultanov headed the Ministry of Energy of Uzbekistan. In October 2018, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev signed a resolution to accelerate the development and ensure the financial sustainability of the electricity industry. The head of state instructed the commission on reforming the electric power industry, headed by PM Abdulla Aripov, to prepare a draft decree of the head of state on the formation of the Ministry of Energy by December 15, 2018. The new department is entrusted with the whole complex of issues of organizing and regulating the activities of the fuel and energy complex of the republic.

From <https://en.trend.az/> 04/08/2022

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## **Oceania**

### **AUSTRALIA: More Than 17 Million Will Vote Within Weeks. Here's Everything That Happens Behind the Scenes**

For the everyday Australian, election day comprises of rocking up to the local school, picking up a sausage sandwich and ticking a couple of boxes. But for tens of



thousands of people behind the scenes, the lead-up to the day itself is months and months of work. Prime Minister Scott Morrison has called the federal election, meaning eligible Australians will decide who forms government in little over a month. The Australian Electoral Commission, the body that oversees and organises elections, has been preparing for the day since last year. "Essentially we've been ready to run an election for a little while, because the election could have been called as early as August last year," the AEC's spokesperson Evan Ekin-Smyth told 7NEWS.com.au. The firing of the starting gun, however, kicks preparations up a notch. The AEC has to finalise where people will vote, who will work at the polling stations and how all the voting material will get there.

"We've got warehouse facilities across the country that are sitting there with materials, ready to pick up and be sent out to different polling places," Ekin-Smyth said. "We've got a register of interest for staff that sits a bit over 200,000 people, ready to tell them the specific date and get the 105,000-odd that we need. "We've also got venues that have been tentatively booked in. But, of course, we don't have day so we need to fill in all those." There's also the matter of getting people eligible to vote registered. More than 17 million people are currently enrolled to vote in mid-May - but there's still tens of thousands outstanding. Australians are being told to check they're already enrolled correctly, or enrol for the first time. Ekin-Smyth said that they have about a week to enrol from the day that the election is called. "We always have a heck of a lot of enrolments come through.

So we have a verifying process for those and it'll be hundreds of thousands in that week." Voting in Australia is compulsory and failing to do so can land you a \$20 fine. But the biggest penalty, Ekin-Smyth says, is missing the opportunity to have your say. To enrol to vote for the first time, get back on the electoral roll or change your name or address, visit the AEC website [here](#). A driver's licence, Australian passport number or someone who is enrolled to confirm your identity is required. Alternately, you can print or pick up a PDF form from an AEC office and return it to the AEC. Australians can also check their enrolment status at the AEC website [here](#). In an era where technology reigns supreme, the meticulous and timely act of counting votes on election night is still done by hand. Thousands of AEC workers will count each and every vote after the polls close.

With more than 17 million Australians voting for both the Senate and the House of Representatives, there are upwards of 34 million ballots to get through. Ekin-Smyth said that as many as 24 million papers are counted on election night. Depending on how the votes turn out, a winning government could be crowned that night. "The count will continue either way and we'll be having ballot papers coming back to us - if they're postal votes in the days and a couple weeks after election day and where people's cast through an early voting centre on the other side of country to where they live or casted overseas. "For instance, we have all those ballot papers coming back to us as well. And there's something like 40,000 transport routes that they use

in total to get them back to us.

“It’s a significant exercise, the count, but our motto is ‘right, not rushed’.” Once all the votes are counted or once we know who has an unassailable lead, the winners of each seat are declared. The party with the majority of seats in the House of Representatives, that is 76 or more of the 151 seats, is declared the winner and their leader becomes the prime minister. Generally, the leader of the party that is not in a position to win will get in contact with the victor to concede the election and congratulate their counterpart. If Anthony Albanese wins, he will be sworn in by Governor-General David Hurley as Australia’s 31st prime minister. The latest Newspoll, conducted for The Australian, predicts a significant victory for Labor. However, as Australians learnt in the last federal election, polls can be wrong. Released last Sunday, the Newspoll indicated that the Coalition was gaining ground on Labor following the federal budget last Tuesday.

Thirty-eight per cent of voters would vote for the Labor party in the next election, it says, a decrease of three points from the previous poll. The Coalition improved one point to 36 per cent. Labor retains a clear lead in the two-party preferred polling, where despite the Coalition tightening the gap by a point the opposition remains eight percentage points ahead at 54-46. Asked who would be a better prime minister, the poll of just over 1500 voters sided narrowly with Morrison, who improved by a point to 43 per cent. Albanese remained unchanged on 42 per cent.

From <https://7news.com.au> 04/12/2022

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## **NEW ZEALAND: Government Strengthening Farm Planning System for Farmers and Growers**

The Government is backing farmers and growers to adapt and innovate with a package of support to strengthen the rural advisory sector, Agriculture Minister Damien O’Connor announced today. Our primary sector has been crucial to New Zealand’s economic recovery from Covid-19. As we continue to accelerate forward in our recovery, and as our primary sector exports look set to hit \$50 billion by 30 June 2022, planning for the future is key. “We’re investing more than \$25 million to expand and strengthen the primary industry advisory sector to ensure farmers and growers have access to the highest quality farm planning support and advice,” Damien O’Connor said. “A careers pathway scheme will focus on growing the diversity and number of advisers, with an emphasis on attracting more women and Māori into roles.

“Employers hiring new advisers, or upskilling existing staff, could receive up to \$22,500 annually per adviser to help cover salary and training costs. “An internship pilot targeting students will support businesses and organisations to provide up to 40 people with experience in the advisory sector. “This is about building the capacity

and capability of advisory services to enable food and fibre producers to access quality support and advice to add value to their agribusinesses.” Damien O’Connor said the Government was committed to working with the sector to boost the number of farm advisers. “We have worked closely with industry organisations, such as the New Zealand Institute of Primary Industry Management (NZIPIM), and whenua Māori entities to determine the most effective way to develop capacity in the sector,” Damien O’Connor said.

A new fund will invest in initiatives across industry, regional councils, whenua Māori entities, communities, and catchment groups to broaden and accelerate the uptake of integrated farm planning by farmers, growers and Māori landowners. “Priority will be given to initiatives that support Māori landowners and agribusinesses, and farmers and growers not currently undertaking farm planning,” Damien O’Connor said. “We’re supporting the uptake of integrated farm planning to make meeting consumer, market, environmental, and business needs easier and less time-consuming for farmers and growers. Damien O’Connor said the initiatives will build on the important on-the-ground work already being undertaken by the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) across the country.

“That includes supporting at least 170 catchment groups and collating data from more than 2,000 farmers and growers to provide a national snapshot of farm performance, as well as partnering with Māori to increase the productivity and profitability of their whenua” Damien O’Connor said. The work is part of the Government’s Fit for a Better World roadmap, which aims for food and fibre sector exports to earn an extra \$44 billion over 10 years. “Fit for a Better World is about sustainability, inclusivity and creating greater value. The roadmap is designed to strengthen the foundations of our trade-led recovery from COVID-19,” Damien O’Connor said. The latest Situation and Outlook for Primary Industries (SOPI) shows revenue from food and fibre exports is predicted to hit a record \$50 billion in the year to 30 June 2022.

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 04/14/2022

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## **Government – The First NZ Ministry to Have a Name in Three Languages**

Disabled people and whānau are being encouraged to be involved in the naming of the new ministry for disabled people. In a first for government ministries, the new ministry will include New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL), reo Māori and English components. The name will replace the current working title – Ministry for Disabled People. The Governance Group overseeing the establishment of the new ministry is urging the community to be involved in the discussion around the new name and other areas of interest. Establishment Governance Group Co-chair, Gerri Pomeroy said, “The long-term purpose of the new Ministry is to transform how government

serves disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori, families and whānau.

“I’m delighted this ministry will be the first to have all three official languages of Aotearoa in its name, and I encourage people to get involved in developing it.” Tāngata whaikaha Māori (Māori disabled people) and Māori leaders are coming together to find the pūrākau (stories) that will lead to the reo Māori part of the name. The Sign Language part of the name is being led by the Deaf community of Aotearoa, through the NZSL Board. The team establishing the new ministry is encouraging people to keep up to date with what’s happening and join the discussion about the English and reo Māori parts of the name through AmplifyU – an online platform developed and managed by disabled people for disabled people. There are other options for people to connect with the mahi, including hui, freepost, an AmplifyU Facebook page and an 0800 number that will be available in the coming weeks.

“Nothing About Us Without Us will be the ethos of the new ministry and top priorities will be ensuring the disability community has real voice, and self-determination, and that all the mahi is mana-enhancing,” added Ms Pomeroy. “Hearing from disabled people and making sure their voices have impact is going to be vital in shaping the future. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity so please do get involved.” The membership of the Governance Group, which Ms Pomeroy co-chairs, reflects the partnership behind the establishment of the new ministry. Its equal representation of tāngata whaikaha Māori, disabled people from the wider community and government officials is also a first in New Zealand Government.

Notes The Ministry for Disabled People Establishment Governance Group is the governing body for the Establishment of the Ministry for Disabled People. It is responsible for ensuring the effective establishment of the Ministry for Disabled People. The Governance Group is supported by the Establishment Community Steering Group. The Community Steering Group members are directly responsible for ensuring the voice of disabled people, whānau, tāngata whaikaha Māori, whānau whaikaha Māori is embedded in the development of the key policies, the operational models and the tikanga of the Ministry.

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 04/22/2022

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### 3、 Management, Capacity Building and Innovation

#### Asia-Pacific

#### **World Bank Group Debars Individual for Collusive and Fraudulent Practices**

The World Bank Group today announced the three-year debarment of an individual

consultant in connection with collusive and fraudulent practices as part of the Rural Service Delivery Project (the “RSD Project”) and the Water Supply and Sanitation Development Project (the “WSSD Project”), both located in Papua New Guinea. The debarment makes Mr. Dicliah Taureka, a Papua New Guinea national, ineligible to participate in projects and operations financed by institutions of the World Bank Group. It is part of a settlement agreement under which Mr. Taureka acknowledges responsibility for the underlying sanctionable practices and agrees to meet specified corporate compliance conditions as a condition for release from debarment. The RSD Project is designed to improve communities’ access to basic infrastructure and services in targeted rural areas using inclusive, participatory planning, and implementation. The WSSD Project is designed to support the development and strengthening of the planning and implementation capacity of water sector institutions, and to increase access to water supply services in selected urban towns and rural districts.

According to the facts of the case, in 2019, Mr. Taureka colluded with a public official to obtain and execute a full-time, Bank-financed consulting contract with the WSSD Project while knowing he was working under another full-time, Bank-financed consulting contract with the RSD Project. Mr. Taureka also sought remuneration for full-time work for days that overlapped between the projects despite not meeting the minimum work requirements as prescribed under the respective contracts. These are collusive and fraudulent practices under the World Bank’s Consultant Guidelines. The settlement agreement provides for a reduced period of debarment in light of Mr. Taureka’s cooperation and voluntary remedial actions. As a condition for release from sanction under the terms of the settlement agreement, Mr. Taureka commits to undertake corporate ethics trainings that demonstrates a commitment to personal integrity and business ethics. In addition, any affiliate that Mr. Taureka comes to control, directly or indirectly, during the period of World Bank Group sanction will be required to implement a corporate ethics training program. Mr. Taureka also commits to continue to fully cooperate with the World Bank Group Integrity Vice Presidency. The debarment of Mr. Taureka qualifies for cross-debarment by other multilateral development banks (MDBs) under the Agreement for Mutual Enforcement of Debarment Decisions that was signed on April 9, 2010.

From <https://www.worldbank.org/> 04/06/2022

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## **World Bank Resumes Processes Under the Indus Waters Treaty**

In line with its responsibilities under the Indus Waters Treaty, the World Bank today announced its decision to resume the two separate processes requested by India and Pakistan in relation to the Kishenganga and Rattle hydroelectric power plants. The decision was formally communicated in letters to India and Pakistan. The two countries disagree over whether the technical design features of these two hydroelectric plants contravene the Treaty. Pakistan asked the World Bank to

facilitate setting up a Court of Arbitration to consider its concerns about the designs of the two hydroelectric power projects, while India asked for the appointment of a Neutral Expert for the same purpose. On December 12, 2016, the World Bank had declared a pause in the two separate processes to allow the two countries to consider alternative ways to resolve their disagreements. Since then, the World Bank has encouraged and worked with both countries to seek an amicable resolution. Multiple high-level meetings have been convened and a variety of proposals have been discussed. The World Bank continues to share the concerns of the Parties that carrying out the two appointments concurrently poses practical and legal risks. However, the lack of success in finding an acceptable solution over the past five years is also a risk to the Treaty itself. In arriving at the decision to resume the two processes, the Bank has carefully considered the views of all Parties involved. The World Bank remains committed to act in good faith and with complete impartiality and transparency while continuing to assist the countries and fulfilling its responsibilities under the Treaty.

From <https://www.worldbank.org/> 04/06/2022

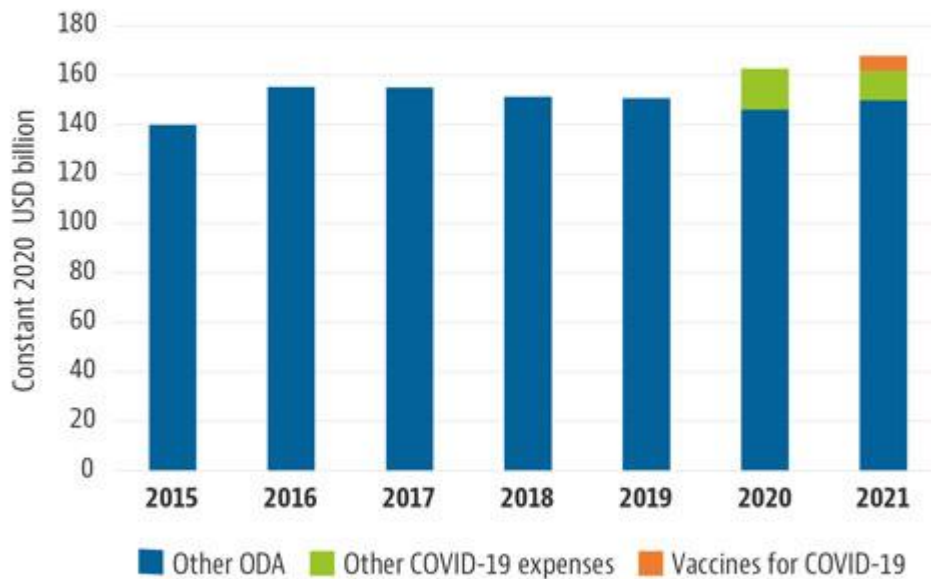
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## **COVID-19 Assistance to Developing Countries Lifts Foreign Aid in 2021 – OECD**

Foreign aid from official donors rose to an all-time high of USD 179 billion in 2021, up 4.4% in real terms from 2020 as developed countries stepped up their help for developing countries grappling with the COVID-19 crisis, according to preliminary data collected by the OECD.



## COVID-19 assistance to developing countries lifts foreign aid in 2021



Source: DAC Statistics (2022)



Official Development Assistance (ODA) provided by members of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in 2021 included USD 6.3 billion spent on providing COVID-19 vaccines to developing countries, equivalent to 3.5% of total ODA. Excluding ODA for donated COVID-19 vaccines, ODA was up 0.6% in real terms from 2020. ODA for donated COVID-19 vaccines equated to nearly 857 million doses for developing countries. Within the USD 6.3 billion total, USD 2.3 billion (1.3% of total ODA), covered donated doses left over from domestic supplies (nearly 357 million doses), USD 3.5 billion went on doses purchased specifically for developing countries, and USD 0.5 billion went on secondary costs. All but one of the DAC's donors followed an OECD recommendation to value 2021 donations of excess COVID-19 vaccines at USD 6.72 per dose, and to make any necessary adjustments if they paid less to ensure no overstating of ODA. (See [OECD guidance](#) on valuing 2021 donations of excess vaccines and [further information](#).) DAC donors spent a total of USD 18.7 billion on COVID-19 related activities, accounting for 10.5% of their combined net 2021 ODA – up from USD 16.6 billion or 10.2% of total ODA in 2020.

“OECD countries have once again shown that even in times of crisis they will step up and provide support to more vulnerable countries and people,” **OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann** said, presenting the new data. “While the effort last year was another significant step up in development support, there continues to be much more to be done. With the world now hit by a new humanitarian crisis following Russia’s unprovoked war on Ukraine, we must make additional efforts

to help those developing countries that will be hardest hit by supply shortages and higher prices for food and key commodities.” The 2021 ODA total is equivalent to 0.33% of DAC donors’ combined gross national income (GNI), unchanged from 2020 and still below the UN target of 0.7% ODA to GNI. Fluctuations in countries’ GNI levels due to the COVID-19 crisis will have affected the trend in that ratio since 2020. Five DAC members – Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg, Norway and Sweden – met or exceeded the 0.7% target in 2021.

ODA rose in 23 DAC countries in 2021, in many cases due to additional support for developing countries hit by the COVID-19 crisis. It fell in six countries. The largest increases were delivered by Italy (34.5%), Korea (+20.7%), Slovenia (+19.0%), Ireland (+14.8%), the United States (+14.4%), New Zealand (+13.8%), Spain (+12.5%), Japan (+12.1%) and Iceland (+11.7%). “At the beginning of the pandemic DAC members committed to strive to protect ODA. They continue to live up to this commitment, despite facing tough fiscal and economic pressures, now made much worse by the war in Ukraine,” **DAC Chair Susanna Moorehead** said. “Multiple crises mean multiple demands on ODA. ODA must support people in need in all partner countries – those forced to flee because of conflict, those who are hungry and those who are particularly poor and vulnerable, especially women and children who suffer most.”

Humanitarian aid amounted to USD 18.8 billion in 2021, up by 3.5% in real terms compared to 2020. Debt relief remained low at USD 545 million. ODA spent on refugees hosted in donor countries were USD 9.3 billion in 2021, little changed in real terms from 2020 and representing 5.2% of total ODA. ODA spent on these so-called in-donor refugee costs has nearly halved (in real terms) since it peaked at USD 16 billion in 2016, when it accounted for 11.0% of total ODA. The share of loans and equity investments in gross bilateral ODA from DAC members decreased to 19% in 2021 from 21% in 2020, with the rest provided as grants. The decrease came as bilateral sovereign loans by DAC countries fell by 4.6%, on a grant-equivalent basis, after increasing by 35% in real terms between 2018 and 2020. The countries with the highest share of loans in their bilateral ODA were Japan (55%), Korea (36%) and France (23%).

ODA makes up over two thirds of external finance for least-developed countries. The OECD also monitors flows from some non-DAC providers and private foundations. Preliminary data released by the OECD each April is followed by final statistics published around the end of the year with a detailed geographic and sectoral breakdown. (See the 2020 ODA breakdown under Development at [OECD.Stat.](#)) Net ODA has risen for the most part steadily in volume terms from just below USD 40 billion (in 2020 prices) in 1960, the first year ODA was measured. It has more than doubled in real terms (up 118%) since 2000, when the Millennium Development Goals were agreed, despite the impact of the 2008 crisis on provider economies. Net



ODA has risen by 20% since the SDGs were adopted in 2015.

**Links to aid data and background information:**

- [2021 ODA statistics](#) in detail
- Interactive charts showing [ODA trends over time](#)
- [More information on ODA](#) (including Frequently Asked Questions, eligible countries, and all OECD aid data including charts on donors & recipients since 1960)

For further information, journalists can contact [Catherine Bremer](#) in the OECD Media Office (+33 1 45 24 80 97). *The DAC is an OECD committee that serves as a forum for 30 donors and observer bodies. ODA is defined as official, concessional, financing flows to promote the economic development and welfare of low and middle-income countries. Net ODA is total ODA spent minus repayment of loan principals by recipient countries. Working with over 100 countries, the OECD is a global policy forum that promotes policies to preserve individual liberty and improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world.*

From <https://www.oecd.org/> 04/12/2022

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## **World Bank Group Debars Centre for Training and Consultancy**

The World Bank Group today announced the 18-month debarment of Centre for Training and Consultancy (CTC), a Georgia-based non-profit organization that provides consultancy and advisory services on strengthening civil society, good governance and effective local self-governance, and education, in connection with a fraudulent practice as part of the Second Regional and Municipal Infrastructure Development Project in Georgia. The debarment makes CTC ineligible to participate in projects and operations financed by institutions of the World Bank Group. It is part of a settlement agreement under which the organization acknowledges responsibility for the underlying sanctionable practice and agrees to meet specified corporate compliance conditions as a condition for release from debarment. The project was designed to improve the efficiency and reliability of targeted municipal services and infrastructure. According to the facts of the case, in February 2016, CTC recklessly omitted the disclosure of a conflict-of-interest relationship when submitting a proposal for a contract under the project, which is a fraudulent practice.

The settlement agreement provides for a reduced period of 18-months in light of CTC's cooperation and acknowledgment of the misconduct. As a condition for release from sanction under the terms of the settlement agreement, CTC commits to implementing bid policies and procedures that reflect the relevant principles set out in the World Bank Group Integrity Compliance Guidelines as well as a corporate ethics training program. CTC also commits to continue to fully cooperate with the World Bank Group Integrity Vice Presidency. The debarment of CTC qualifies for cross-debarment by other multilateral development banks (MDBs) under the

Agreement for Mutual Enforcement of Debarment Decisions that was signed on April 9, 2010.

From <https://www.worldbank.org/> 04/27/2022

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## **Project Design Quality, Supervision, and Monitoring Imperative for Ensuring Project Effectiveness: Independent Evaluation**

Adequate project design quality, close supervision, and active monitoring are crucial for improving the project effectiveness of both public and private sector operations of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), says an independent evaluation report released today. The 2022 Annual Evaluation Review (AER) conducted by ADB's Independent Evaluation Department (IED) analyzed the factors that influenced the declining trend in project effectiveness between 2016 and 2020. "A robust assessment of the risks and assumptions enables ADB to identify appropriate investment modalities," said IED Director General Emmanuel Jimenez. "Stronger project designs, supervision as well as the establishment and maintenance of robust project performance monitoring systems will improve projects' effectiveness, especially in the case of nonsovereign operation to support environment, social, health, and safety performance."

The report called on ADB to closely align project scopes with financing plans and implementation arrangements as well as establish clear targets and mechanisms to monitor them. It also pointed out the need for effective implementation of institutional support and targeted reforms for strengthening the executing and/or implementing agency's capacity to enhance project effectiveness. In 2019–2021, 70% of ADB's sovereign operations were rated successful, while nonsovereign operations remained low at 55% although there was marginal rise in the success rate. "The findings showed that although ADB accepted the majority of IED evaluation recommendations, further efforts are needed to narrow the gap between the acceptance of recommendations and their implementation," said ADB Senior Evaluation Specialist and co-author of the report Sung Shin. The AER also conducted an in-depth assessment on ADB's engagement in fragile and conflict-affected situations (FCAS) and small island developing states (SIDS), which are facing pandemic-related fiscal challenges. "A focus on FCAS and SIDS is timely as the COVID-19 pandemic intensifies existing drivers of conflict and fragility in these environments," said ADB Principal Evaluation Specialist and the author of the special chapter Hyun Son. "ADB has long recognized the need to engage continually and work differently in FCAS and SIDS, but it can do better in addressing the context-specific drivers of fragility and conflict in these countries."

The report underscored the need for more long-term and well-coordinated support rather than short-term, one-off technical assistance to help address capacity and governance challenges. It also stressed that giving equal emphasis to active conflict and to institutional fragilities is imperative when implementing ADB's FCAS-related

approaches. It recommended ADB's country- and project-level monitoring frameworks and indicators to be better tailored to their contexts. The report viewed resilience in FCAS and SIDS as a multidimensional challenge that requires ADB's long-term capacity development support and enhanced collaboration with other development organizations. ADB's partnerships with humanitarian and development agencies are crucial in bridging relief and development, especially in conflict-affected areas.

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## East Asia

### **CHINA: Lifting 800 Million People Out of Poverty – New Report Looks at Lessons from China's Experience**

Over the past 40 years, the number of people in China with incomes below \$1.90 per day – the International Poverty Line as defined by the World Bank to track global extreme poverty– has fallen by close to 800 million. With this, China has contributed close to three-quarters of the global reduction in the number of people living in extreme poverty. At China's current national poverty line, the number of poor fell by 770 million over the same period. To take stock of this achievement, a joint study – “Four Decades of Poverty Reduction in China: Drivers, Insights for the World, and the Way Ahead” – was undertaken by China's Ministry of Finance, the Development Research Center (DRC) of the State Council, and the World Bank, with the China Center for International Knowledge on Development (CIKD) acting as the implementing agency. The report looks at the key drivers of China's poverty alleviation achievements over the past 40 years, considers the insights of China's experience for other developing countries and puts forward suggestions for China's own future policies.

“China's battle against poverty has benefited the largest number of people in human history,” said Minister Ma Jiantang, Secretary of the Party Leadership Group of the DRC. “To sustain poverty reduction gains, China will focus more on achieving endogenous development in areas that have been lifted out of poverty and introduce vigorous measures to support rural revitalization. Our goal is to achieve common prosperity and high-quality development including through the rural revitalization strategy with a focus in five key areas: industry development, human capital, culture, ecological environment and local governance.” “China achieved its goal of poverty reduction in the new era as scheduled at the end of 2020”, said Yu Weiping, Vice Minister of Finance. “We have accomplished the arduous task of eliminating extreme poverty, and made significant contributions to global poverty reduction. Going forward, China will continue to sustain and expand the gains in poverty alleviation and comprehensively realize rural revitalization. The Ministry of Finance will ensure that sound fiscal policy measures will be made and implemented to support the

transition. We stand ready to continue strengthening cooperation with the World Bank in relevant areas.”

“China’s poverty reduction story is a story of persistent growth through economic transformation,” said Manuela V. Ferro, World Bank Vice President for East Asia and Pacific. “As China’s economy adjusts to a new low carbon growth model, its social policies will need to be adapted to support greater labor mobility, upgrade skill levels in line with shifts in labor demand, and offer improved social protection to ensure a just transition.” China’s approach to poverty reduction has been based on two pillars, according to the report. The first was broad-based economic transformation to open new economic opportunities and raise average incomes. The second was the recognition that targeted support was needed to alleviate persistent poverty; support was initially provided to areas disadvantaged by geography and the lack of opportunities and later to individual households. The report points to a number of lessons for other countries from China’s experience, including the importance of a focus on education, an outward orientation, sustained public investments in infrastructure, and structural policies supportive of competition.

The report also highlights how the success of China’s economic development and the associated reduction of poverty benefited from effective governance, which helped coordinate multiple government agencies and elicit cooperation from non-government stakeholders. To illustrate the role of broad-based economic transformation in poverty alleviation, separate sections of the report analyze growing agricultural productivity, incremental industrialization, managed urbanization and rural-to-urban migration, and the role of infrastructure. The evolution of China’s approach to poverty alleviation, from place-based to country-wide social protection policies, and the targeted poverty alleviation strategy since 2012 are also reviewed.

The report considers the likely future structural shifts in China’s growth model, including rebalancing towards consumption and high value services and embarking on the transition towards carbon neutrality, and their implications for China’s future policy agenda. It highlights the need to close remaining gaps in quality education between rural and urban areas and to provide better social protection to migrant workers, and the scope for improved integration of the various existing social security policies. Over the past two years, the joint research team conducted field studies in the regions of Ningxia and Zhejiang, held a series of workshops with domestic and international experts, and worked closely with academic institutions on data analysis. Several working papers have been published containing details of the case studies and data analysis. The report presents a synthesis of this work. The study was released on March 31 at a joint event in Beijing attended by Secretary of the Party Leadership Group of the DRC Ma Jiantang, Vice Minister of Finance Yu Weiping, and World Bank Vice President for East Asia and Pacific Manuela V. Ferro.

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## **Chinese Premier Stresses Importance of Stabilizing Economic Fundamentals**

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang has stressed the importance of efforts to keep the fundamentals of the economy stable and ensure the country's economy runs within an appropriate range. Li, also a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, made the remarks while presiding over a symposium on the economic situation, attended by economists and entrepreneurs on Thursday. Noting that complicated global situation and domestic COVID-19 resurgences have brought about greater uncertainties and challenges to the stable economic performance, Li called for efforts to balance epidemic response and economic and social development, and stressed that introduced policies should produce effects early on and be intensified when appropriate.

The economists and entrepreneurs in attendance offered suggestions on measures to implement macro policies, promote logistics and transport, ensure farming supplies, and boost enterprise innovation. Noting that some market entities are facing mounting pressures, Li said that measures such as facilitating value-added tax credit refunds should be taken to help market entities, especially those of smaller scales, tide over the difficulties. The key to keeping the country's economy running within an appropriate range is stabilizing employment and price levels, Li said. On boosting employment, the premier stressed the importance of improving employment services for university and college graduates, and encouraging business start-ups. Aiming to stabilize prices, China should ramp up efforts in key fields such as grain production, energy supply and logistics operations, Li said.

He urged more targeted measures, including promoting spring farming, supporting coal companies and power plants to generate more electricity, and guaranteeing the orderly operations of major transport networks. When formulating and implementing policies, all types of enterprises should be treated equally, with their voices heard and market expectations anchored, Li said. Efforts should be made to promote the sound and sustainable development of the platform economy, and more support should be given to consumption-related sectors such as retail, catering and tourism to help ease difficulties, the premier said. Li called for the expansion of high-level opening-up, doing a good job in stabilizing foreign trade and foreign investment, maintaining the renminbi exchange rate at a generally stable, adaptive and balanced level to effectively address external uncertainties.

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## **Chinese Premier Stresses Flood Control, Drought Relief**

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang has called for efforts to step up flood control and drought relief work, as part of efforts to ensure the safety of people's lives and property. Li, also a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, made the remarks in an instruction to a video conference on flood control and drought relief held Thursday. Flood control and drought relief work is closely related to the overall situation of economic and social development, as well as security and stability, especially under the complex and severe domestic and external conditions of this year, said Li. All localities and departments should give priority to disaster prevention and combine disaster prevention, disaster response and disaster relief, he said. Efforts should be made to optimize disaster prevention and control plans, strengthen risk monitoring and early warning, and ensure that emergency materials are sufficient and in place, said the premier. He stressed that, when necessary, people should be transferred to avoid danger, in dealing with natural disasters such as urban flooding, mountain flooding and typhoons. Chinese State Councilor Wang Yong, also head of the State Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters, attended the conference.

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## **Emancipate Mind, Strive for Innovation, Work Hard Together to Accelerate the Construction of Hainan Free Trade Port: Xi**

On an inspection tour in Hainan Province in recent days, Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, president of the People's Republic of China and chairman of the Central Military Commission, stressed that decisions and policies of the CPC Central Committee must be carried out to the letter. The general principle of pursuing progress while maintaining stability must be adhered to and the new development philosophy must be carried out in a complete, precise and all-round manner, Xi said. Reform and opening up must be deepened in all respects and innovation must be pursued as a driving force for development, he said. Prevention and control of the epidemic must be coordinated with economic and social development and so must be development and security, he stressed.

We must emancipate mind, break new ground, strive for innovation, work hard together, overcome difficulties squarely, and accelerate the construction of a free trade port with Chinese characteristics and global influence so that Hainan will become a model to follow for China's reform and opening up in the new era, with a view to setting the stage with concrete action for the 20th National Congress of the CPC. From Sunday to Wednesday, accompanied by Shen Xiaoming, Party committee secretary of Hainan, and the governor Feng Fei, Xi went to Sanya, Wuzhishan and Danzhou where he visited scientific research institutes, a national park, a village of the Li people and a port wharf. On Sunday afternoon, Xi first visited the Yazhou Bay Seed Laboratory in Yazhou Bay Science and Technology City,

Sanya. Xi was briefed on the science and technology city and the laboratory, watched how the lab's platforms supported seed industry innovation.

He approved of Hainan's efforts in exploring an innovative mode for agricultural science and technology to support and guarantee national food security. Xi visited the lab's large instrument public service center and a center of precision molecular design breeding and talked with the research staff working there. Xi pointed out that if we Chinese people want to hold tight in hands our rice bowl, we must develop the seed industry on our own. He urged efforts to focus on making breakthroughs when it comes to ensuring food security and securing the supply of important agricultural produce. Efforts must be made to realize self-reliance in seed technology and make sure that sources of seeds are under our own control, Xi said. We must secure China's food supply with our own seeds, he said.

Xi called on local scientists and staff to keep the motherland in mind and serve the people wholeheartedly as the older generation of agricultural scientists did and make painstaking efforts with perseverance to achieve even more in agricultural science and technology. Then, Xi went to Sanya Oceanographic Institute under Ocean University of China to learn about the research and application of oceanographic instruments and information services system. When talking via video link with the frontline staff working for the Deep Sea No.1 gas field and hearing about their work, Xi extended sincere greetings to them and asked them to watch out and take care of themselves. Xi stressed that building China into a strong maritime country is a major strategic task for realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Efforts must be made to strive for high-level independence and self-reliance in marine science and technology, and to make breakthroughs in original and leading technologies, he said.

Xi underlined the importance of using equipment manufactured on our own to exploit gas and oil resources and to increase energy self-sufficiency so as to guarantee the national energy security. On his way of inspection, Xi got off the vehicle to take a look at how the environmental protection work is conducted along the coast. He also fertilized and watered a tree he had planted 12 years ago. Xi called on local officials to coordinate land and marine development and take ecological protection as an important task. An offshore duty-free program has been piloted in Hainan as of April 20, 2011. On Monday morning, Xi arrived at the Sanya International Duty-Free Shopping Complex to learn about how the offshore duty-free policy was implemented. Xi pointed out that the fundamental role of consumption in driving economic growth should be better leveraged, a favorable market environment and a sound legal environment should be created based on the country's huge market.

Retailers should attract consumers by doing business in good faith and providing quality services, so as to make greater contributions to building a free trade port with Chinese characteristics, he added. On Monday afternoon, Xi began his inspection

tour in the city of Wuzhishan in the central and southern parts of Hainan island. The Hainan Tropical Rainforest National Park is among the first five national parks established in China. In the park, Xi walked along a boardwalk to inspect its ecological environment. He stopped from time to time to inquire about the growth of trees, the conservation of water and the protection of animals and plants. Xi pointed out that Hainan must remain committed to building an ecological province and place ecological conservation high on its agenda. He added that rainforests must be strictly protected, and that the efforts to protect the ecosystem, pursue green development and improve people's lives must go hand in hand, so as to demonstrate to the world the fruitful results China has achieved in building national parks and protecting biodiversity.

Maona Village of Shuiman Township is a Li ethnic village in the city of Wuzhishan. It has been building a beautiful countryside and developing rural tourism in recent years. Upon his arrival at Maona, Xi walked along the village road and looked around. He visited the home of Wang Bohe, a Li ethnic villager. Wang and his family greeted him warmly, and showed him the yard, the living room and the bedrooms. Xi also took part in the frying process of tea leaves at their handmade tea workshop, and bought two packets of tea. He encouraged Wang and his family to run the tea business well and become more and more well-off. Under a pavilion, Xi talked with the first Party secretary stationed in the village, leader of the rural revitalization work team, secretary of the village's Party branch, veteran Party members and representatives of entrepreneurial individuals. He learned about how the villagers developed industries based on local conditions, and protected and kept alive their traditional ethnic culture.

Human resources are the key to promoting all-round rural revitalization, Xi stressed. He called for fostering a contingent of officials that are politically upright, professionally competent and strictly disciplined in conduct, and encouraging talented people of all types, including entrepreneurial individuals, college graduates returning to their hometowns to start businesses, as well as ex-servicemen, to commit themselves to advancing rural revitalization. The primary-level Party branches in rural areas must be strengthened to ensure that they play a crucial role in this endeavor, he said. Xi viewed an exhibition of agricultural products with Li ethnic features, as well as intangible cultural heritage such as Li brocade and rattan weaving, along a corridor. On a public square, villagers welcomed the guests from afar with singing, folk music and dancing.

It was a great pleasure to visit the fellow Li villagers, Xi told them amiably, adding that he was glad to see them enjoying a happy life. After achieving moderate prosperity in all respects, we are striving toward common prosperity and socialist modernization, he said. Xi said rural revitalization should focus on integrating industries and ecosystems, and efforts should be made to develop industries such as organic farming, rural tourism and leisure agriculture, preserve the intangible cultural



heritage, and consolidate and expand the achievements in poverty alleviation to promote rural revitalization. Officials at all levels must follow the mass line, keep in mind the Party's fundamental purpose, think from the people's perspective, respond to their needs, and put all efforts into ensuring a better life for the people.

On Tuesday morning, Xi went to Danzhou, a city in the northwestern part of the island. In an exhibition hall, Xi learned about the general development of the Yangpu Economic Development Zone, and looked carefully into the zone's development path, achievements and plans, as well as outcomes of enterprises located in the zone. Yangpu Economic Development Zone is a pioneer and demonstration area for the Hainan Free Trade Port (FTP), Xi noted, calling for summing up Hainan's experience from developing special economic zone, leveraging the preferential policy of Yangpu as a port of registry, and being bold to pursue innovation and test new initiatives. Xi then arrived at the Xiaochantan wharf of the Yangpu International Container Port to learn about the port's development. He had a cordial exchange with workers and the representatives of the officials assigned to work here from the central agencies.

Xi stressed that in revitalizing the port and developing the transportation industry Hainan should get a clear understanding of its position and improve adaptability. The island province should pursue green development, prioritize ecological protection, and enhance synergy between port development and the construction of the Yangpu Economic Development Zone and the Hainan FTP in order to better contribute to the development of the new land-sea transit routes for the western region and the Belt and Road Initiative. Xi pointed out that the central authorities have selected and dispatched officials to Hainan, which shows the care and support of the CPC Central Committee for the FTP's development, and also provides an opportunity for these officials to accumulate practical experience. Full play should be given to their positive role so that their ability will be strengthened during frontline work.

On Wednesday morning, after a visit to an exhibition featuring the achievements made by Hainan in comprehensively deepening reform and opening up and developing a free trade port with Chinese characteristics, Xi heard the work report from the CPC Hainan provincial committee and the Hainan government. Xi acknowledged their achievements and expressed his hope that the province, with a sense of historical responsibility that "with no thought to claim credit, but with resolve to contribute," will build the Hainan FTP into a shining brand name of China. Xi pointed out that we should fully prepare ourselves, both in thinking and in our work, for a protracted endeavor as it is a complex and systematic project to advance the development of the Hainan FTP. Hainan will continue to deliver in implementing the master plan for the Hainan FTP and the Hainan Free Trade Port Law.

Hainan will set great store by integrated innovation in institutions and bolster the mechanism featuring central planning, departmental support and provincial implementation, so that the Hainan FTP will initiate independent customs operations

on schedule. We must unwaveringly uphold the Party's leadership, bear in mind the overall interests of the Party and the state in our work, and always keep to the correct political course. We must unwaveringly uphold the Chinese socialist system and remain committed to socialism with Chinese characteristics. We must never falter in safeguarding national security, better identify and guard against major risks, coordinate reform, development and stability, and stick to the principle of establishing the new before dissolving the old.

Xi emphasized that implementing the new development philosophy and promoting high-quality growth is the fundamental way for Hainan to achieve better development. He called on Hainan to develop tourism, modern services, high-tech industries, high-efficiency tropical agriculture, and accelerate the building of a modern industrial system. Hainan needs to accelerate the reform of systems and mechanisms for science and technology, and intensify efforts to promote scientific and technological innovations and the application of their results, Xi said. Hainan should promote land and marine planning in a comprehensive way, coordinate the development of mountainous and coastal areas, and integrate resources to promote balanced development between urban and rural areas and between regions, he said, adding that efforts must be made to eliminate institutional drawbacks in all areas and form the pattern of opening up on a larger scale, across more areas, and in greater depth.

Xi noted that Hainan should deepen supply-side structural reform in agriculture, strengthen the agriculture industrial chain, and hold firm to the red lines for ecological protection, permanent basic cropland, and urban development boundary. It is necessary to promote the integrated and coordinated development of urban and rural areas and reclamation areas, accelerate the building of the national seed breeding base in Hainan, and improve the policy for supporting the natural rubber industry, he added. He said Hainan should intensify efforts to prevent and control pollution and implement the strictest possible measures to regulate reclamation and coastal development. Hainan must also make solid progress in developing the national pilot zone for ecological conservation.

Xi added that the Hainan Tropical Rainforest National Park is a national treasure, which helps conserve water sources, boost grain production and bring in economic benefits, and serves well as a carbon sink in particular. Hainan should fully understand its strategic significance to the country and strive to make it bear fruitful results. He stressed that the more we deepen the reform and open wider to the world, the more important it is to advance cultural and ethical progress. We need to persistently step up the education on ideals and convictions, foster and promote core socialist values, carry out extensive campaigns for the public to promote cultural and ethical progress, and raise the level of social etiquettes and civility. Xi said that we should also strengthen the building of credibility and advocate the social norm of abiding by disciplines and laws and being honest and trustworthy.

He noted that we need to take more effective measures and actions to warm the hearts of the people. We need to work hard to address the pressing problems and worries of the people, and actively explore ways to achieve common prosperity. We will continue to implement policies to reduce burdens, stabilize and increase employment, and improve the mechanism for ensuring supply and price stability of important commodities for people's lives, he added. Xi noted that we will fully implement the Party's education policy and promote balanced development and urban-rural integration in compulsory education. We will perform social governance in an all-round way, ensure workplace safety, carry out regular campaigns to eradicate gang crimes, and crack down on all kinds of maritime related illegal activities. Strict enforcement of Party rules and discipline will remain an abiding principle, Xi stressed.

We must ensure full, rigorous governance of the Party and promote the overall development of the Party with a focus on political work. We will consolidate and build on the results of the initiatives to study the CPC history and carry forward the great founding spirit of the Party. By making full use of revolution-related resources in Hainan such as memorial sites for the Qiongya Column and the Red Detachment of Women, we will guide Party members and officials in strengthening beliefs and convictions, pass on the traditions of revolution, and sustain our revolutionary legacy, Xi said. We will strengthen training of officials and help Party members and officials to equip themselves with the Party's new theories and consciously put into practice the Party's founding mission. They need to redouble their efforts to overcome the problem of inadequate ability and anxieties it creates and address pointless formalities and bureaucratism.

We will build solid communities, continue to expand Party organizations' effective coverage, and ensure primary-level Party organizations play their key role in all sectors. We must maintain a tough stance against corruption, accurately grasp the new features of anti-corruption endeavors in the current stage, and adopt a holistic approach to see that officials do not have the opportunity, desire, or audacity to engage in corruption. We should also refine systems and close loopholes in approval of land leasing, real estate development, investment solicitation and project launching. All these will help foster a healthy political atmosphere. Given that the global COVID pandemic situation is still grave, we must never relax our response, Xi noted. Victory comes from perseverance. We must always put the people and their lives first, adhere to the principle of guarding against imported cases and domestic resurgences, and follow a science-based, targeted approach and zero-COVID policy.

All epidemic response measures must be implemented in a solid and meticulous manner. We must not drop our guard, lose drive, take chances or slacken efforts. We should respond to the new features of virus variants and make our response measures more judicious and targeted. We will improve planning for various contingencies, strictly implement routine prevention and control measures, and

reduce the epidemic's impact on economic and social development to the minimum. Ding Xuexiang, Liu He, Chen Xi, He Lifeng and leading officials of related central authorities also joined the inspection.

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## **China Makes Notable Achievements in Shoring Up Public Security**

Over the past year, China has made notable achievements in shoring up public and national security, according to a press conference by China's Ministry of Public Security on Friday. Social stability has been sustained, and a remarkable record has been maintained in preventing terrorist incidents nationwide, said the ministry. Responding to emergency calls from the public, Chinese police over the past year have handled over 11.5 million emergencies involving illegal activities and over 31.9 million emergencies where the public required help, said the ministry. Over the past year, 256,000 smart security communities have been built, and 77,000 cases involving economic offenses have been resolved, with over 28.1 billion yuan (around 4.4 billion U.S. dollars) in losses retrieved. China has also made continuous efforts to combat organized crime and root out local criminal gangs on an ongoing basis. The country carried out a targeted campaign to fight illegal activities in cyberspace, during which 62,000 cases have been handled, said the ministry. Friday marked the country's seventh National Security Education Day.

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## **China to Take Further Steps for Spring Farming, Ensure and Increase Energy Supply**

China will adopt measures for sound agricultural production in the spring to ensure a bumper harvest and stable supply of major agricultural products, according to a decision made at the State Council's Executive Meeting chaired by Premier Li Keqiang on Wednesday. The meeting pointed out that job security and price stability are both key underpinnings for keeping major economic indicators within an appropriate range. The stable production and supply of grains and other important agricultural products serve as an anchor for overall economic and social stability, especially for keeping consumer prices stable and ensuring people's essential needs. This is particularly important given the growing uncertainties in the international food market and high inflation in some countries. "We must pay great attention to agricultural production now, and keep up with the farming schedule. China enjoys sufficient provision and reserve of grains, and spring sowing this year is steadily advancing. Food security can be guaranteed." Li said.

"All localities must strictly fulfill their responsibilities for food security. The coordinated progress of COVID-19 response and spring agricultural production will be an important part of performance assessment," he said. According to the premier, special task forces will be set up to coordinate the efforts for agricultural production in the spring, sufficient provision and stable prices of agricultural supplies, and marketing of agricultural products. The full-year targets of grain acreage and output will be broken down, and localities are urged to carry out spring sowing in full and during the optimum time and leave no farmland uncultivated. Those who fail to complete assigned tasks will be held accountable. The primary role of new types of agribusiness will be brought into play, to provide such services as third-party cultivation and help small household farmers and those affected by COVID-19 farm their land. Concrete efforts must be made to ensure sound spring plowing and other agricultural activities. Well-calibrated steps will be taken to organize and guide the activities. To keep up with the farming schedule, work will be done to help migrant farmers return home for farming, facilitate the availability of agricultural supplies in rural areas, ensure the passage of agricultural machinery and make the services of agricultural technicians more accessible to farmers.

The policy of "green lane" service for the transportation of fresh farm produce will be implemented to facilitate smooth circulation of vegetables and other agricultural products. Policies to support and benefit farmers will be effectively implemented. Funds for assisting grain production will be delivered to farmers as quickly as possible. Measures will be explored to increase agricultural supplies subsidies, and grains procurement as necessary will be conducted in a timely manner to keep grain-growers motivated. The meeting also identified policy steps to ensure and increase energy supply, and continue to optimize the energy mix, to expand effective investment and job creation, and enhance the capacity of energy in driving economic and social development. The meeting pointed out that energy is the fundamental underpinning of economic and social development. It is essential to address the new challenges of the external environment based on China's own national conditions, and strengthen energy supply with well-defined priorities. It is important to plan ahead and stay prepared, take forward energy projects with ripe conditions that meet development needs.

"Energy is a matter of critical importance. We must plan ahead and stay prepared, and be self-reliant in ensuring energy security," Li said. The meeting decided that the role of coal as the primary energy source should be harnessed. Concerted efforts must be made to fine-tune the review and approval policies regarding the production, project construction and other activities of coal enterprises. Sub-national governments must earnestly fulfill their responsibilities for stable production and provision, and advanced production capacity should be fully unlocked. The country will strive to increase coal production capacity by 300 million tonnes this year by approving higher production capacity, expanding output and putting new projects into operation. Clean and efficient use of coal will be promoted, and construction of

reserve facilities intensified. Market-oriented and law-based approaches will be applied to guide coal prices toward running within an appropriate range. Efforts will be made to renovate coal-fired power plants to conserve resources, reduce carbon emissions, make operations more flexible and upgrade heating facilities, with the aim of raising energy efficiency and transforming more than 220 million kilowatts of coal-fired power capacity this year.

Such renovation should be conducted during routine repair and maintenance of power generation units, to avoid disrupting stable power supply. Financial policies in support of the renovation of coal-fired power units will be earnestly implemented. Nuclear power will be developed in a well-paced manner on the premise of ensuring absolute security and exercising strict oversight. With years of preparations and comprehensive assessment and review, approval is granted for the projects of new nuclear power units identified in the national plan in Sanmen of Zhejiang Province, Haiyang of Shandong Province and Lufeng of Guangdong Province. "We must fully unleash the production capacity of quality coal. Government departments across the country should provide full support," Li said. "We must ensure the absolute security of nuclear power. Regulations in this regard should be effectively enforced."

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## **Chinese Vice Premier Stresses Ensuring Agricultural Supplies**

Chinese Vice Premier Hu Chunhua on Thursday called for all-out efforts of spring farming and ensuring sufficient and smooth agricultural supplies. Hu, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, made the remarks while inspecting the China National Agricultural Means of Production Group Corporation. Hu urged the company to shoulder its responsibility in securing agricultural supplies including chemical fertilizer, while stabilizing the prices and coordinating production, sales and transportation. Efforts should also be made to provide more professional agricultural production services for farmers, Hu said. He also said that "green channels" should be opened for the smooth transportation of supplies and that the operations of agricultural stores should be guaranteed.

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## **Chinese Vice Premier Urges More "Boao Plans" for Regional Development**

Chinese Vice Premier Han Zheng on Thursday called for the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) to actively provide "Boao plans" for regional development, and make more suggestions for pandemic response cooperation, global economic recovery and low-carbon development, among other issues. Han, also a member of the Standing

Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, made the remarks when he met in south China's Hainan Province with members of the BFA board of directors and representatives of the forum's strategic partners. Han also attended the opening ceremony of BFA Annual Conference 2022 and exchanged views with representatives from the business sector. In the face of challenges including the COVID-19 pandemic, the will to safeguard peace and security, enhance cooperation and work for common development must be strengthened, and such an aspiration must be put into action in a timely manner, Han said.

BFA Chairman Ban Ki-moon and other representatives attending the meeting expressed their willingness to play a positive role in promoting cooperation in Asia and in regional economic integration. When he met with entrepreneurs, Han noted that China's economy is generally stable and that China is fully confident in its ability to realize sustained and sound economic development. China will ensure the stable supply of energy and electricity this year, and continue to forge a market-oriented, law-based business environment, he said. Entrepreneurs attending the meeting made positive comments about the Chinese government's efforts to continuously open up the country and improve its business environment, and expressed their readiness to seize opportunities in China and take further part in China's development.

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## **Agricultural Industries Help Revitalize Mountainous County**

Xu Xianlin, a grower of water shield, proudly says he can cook different dishes with the aquatic vegetable to treat his growing number of guests since joining the booming rural tourism industry. Xu is a villager from Balong Village, Shizhu Tujia Autonomous County of southwest China's Chongqing Municipality. More than 360 households in the village grow water shield, a medicinal and edible plant that is famous for its high nutritional value. After three decades of development, the county has now become a major production area of water shield, with a total planting area of over 900 hectares. More than 10,000 tonnes of water shield from Shizhu county is exported to Japan and the Republic of Korea every year. Besides water shield planting, villagers in Balong have begun to dabble in rural tourism. They run homestays and organize water shield picking and sightseeing activities to attract tourists. "Although we have been affected by the epidemic, I still earned nearly 300,000 yuan (about 46,900 U.S. dollars) last year," said Xu. Sitting deep in the mountains, Shizhu was once a poverty-stricken place.

However, the small county has undergone huge changes due to the development of agricultural industries. Since the local people love spicy food, farmers in Shizhu have planted chillies for hundreds of years. The county currently has more than 30,000

households growing over 6,666 hectares of chillies, and the output of the county's chilli industry has reached 700 million yuan. To cultivate chilli with better quality, the county's chilli institute set up a scientific research team and spent five years creating a better chilli variety. "Better quality products can attract more customers with higher prices. Therefore, farmers are willing to grow the new variety, and it will also help increase their income," said Tan Yangguo, leader of the team. Relying on the good environment and lush alpine vegetation, Shizhu's Huangshui Township has become an important production area of coptis root, a traditional Chinese herb. The county has built a whole industrial chain covering everything from research and development of planting technology to deep processing of the herb.

There are nearly 10,000 households growing coptis for the industry, each of them earning over 30,000 yuan per year. The county also built a large-scale coptis root trading market, and the annual trading volume of the herb accounts for about 90 percent of the country's volume. Apart from coptis root planting, an increasing number of rural residents in the county have also begun planting other traditional Chinese herbs, further supplementing their incomes. "We take advantage of the ecological environment and also attach importance to the production and market. The continuous improvement of Shizhu's chilli, coptis root and water shield industries, as well as the upgraded chains, will help villagers become richer and enjoy better lives," said Zhang Hua, Party chief of Shizhu county.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 04/24/2022

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## **China Prioritizes Job-creation to Unleash Full Growth Potential Against Headwinds**

China is actively incorporating its long-standing employment-first approach into its pro-growth measures to help cushion the economy against potential impacts from heightened uncertainties. China's surveyed urban unemployment rate stood at 5.5 percent in the first quarter of this year, up 0.1 percentage points from the same period last year, data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed. China's employment has remained generally stable since the beginning of this year thanks to its employment-first policy and ever-increasing support for struggling businesses, said NBS spokesperson Fu Linghui. Employment and economic growth are mutually reinforcing, and thus job creation has been put high on the policy agenda. Chinese policymakers have repeatedly pointed out that job security and price stability are both key underpinnings for keeping major economic indicators within an appropriate range.

Prioritizing employment enabled China to achieve 2.2 percent growth in 2020, making it the only major economy to achieve positive expansion during a year that saw the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the country did not set a numerical target for overall growth that year, it aimed at creating over 9 million urban



jobs and ended up adding 11 million. China will be able to achieve its potential economic growth as long as it can realize maximum employment, noted Premier Li Keqiang after China's annual legislative session in March this year. "This year, we will step up the implementation of macro policies, and focus our fiscal and monetary policies on achieving employment targets," Li said. The job market cooled in March after a heady start in the first two months, with the urban unemployment rate edging up 0.3 percentage points from February to 5.8 percent, while the unemployment rate among those aged between 16 and 24 stood at a biting 16 percent.

The number of urban job seekers in 2022 is at the highest in years, which includes a record 10.76 million college graduates. Meanwhile, companies bearing the brunt of a complex global situation and sporadic domestic COVID-19 resurgences are cutting back on hiring. The March unemployment figures have prompted China to make extra efforts to achieve its annual job creation goals, as during this month companies usually resume hiring following the Chinese New Year holiday, said Zeng Xiangquan, a researcher with the Renmin University of China. China aims to create over 11 million new urban jobs and keep a surveyed urban unemployment rate of no more than 5.5 percent in 2022, according to a government work report. To that end, Chinese authorities are striving to revitalize market entities, ensure employment for key groups, and support flexible employment.

Noting that micro, small and medium firms hold around 80 percent of the country's jobs, Yi Gang, governor of the People's Bank of China, said the central bank will continue to crank up inclusive finance for these firms. The central bank announced cutting the reserve requirement ratio for financial institutions by 0.25 percent from Monday to strengthen financial support for epidemic-affected sectors and smaller firms. "The main goal of China's monetary policy is keeping prices and employment stable," Yi said. On the fiscal front, China vowed to implement a value-added tax credit refund worth around 1.5 trillion yuan (about 232 billion U.S. dollars), postpone payments of old-age insurance premiums and refund more unemployment insurance premiums, and provide one-off employment and training subsidies to small firms. These measures help save costs for firms so that they have more incentive to retain their staff.

To assist job seekers in better preparing for the labor market, China will provide them with no fewer than 1 million internship openings this year and allow localities to use the balance of the employment insurance funds to support vocational training programs. Special attention is being given to key groups of job seekers. The country aims to add 2 million high-quality jobs for college graduates and ensure no less than 30 million people who had shaken off poverty are employed this year. The flexibly employed, with their numbers coming in at 200 million and counting, will be eligible for stronger credit support and better protection from occupational hazards. China aims to achieve an economic growth of 5.5 percent in 2022, with each percentage point of growth expected to help generate over 2 million jobs.

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## **China to Further Tap Consumption Potential**

China on Monday unveiled guidelines to further tap the country's consumption potential, with detailed measures to tackle short-term bottlenecks and boost longer-term consumption vitality. The country plans to build a batch of warehouses in the suburbs of large and medium-sized cities to ensure the supply of daily necessities in case of emergencies, according to the guidelines released by the General Office of the State Council. The guidelines also required the financial institutions to further support the real economy through measures such as lowering lending rates and cutting fees, among other measures to help the country cope with the impacts of COVID-19. The resurgences of the epidemic in multiple cities since March have weighed notably on consumption growth in China.

In March, the retail sales of consumer goods decreased by 3.5 percent year on year. The guidelines noted the difficulties facing the economy, especially the contact-based sectors. It said the country would offer specific support to help those who suffered the most through these difficult times. In addition to measures to boost short-term consumption recovery, the guidelines also detailed policies to boost consumption in the medium and long term. China will develop products and services that cater to the needs of the elderly and infants while encouraging innovations in cultural consumption, the guidelines said. It will also tap the consumption potential in the country's vast rural areas, promoting the sales of automobiles and home appliances in these regions. The guidelines encouraged cities to phase out auto-consumption restrictions based on their own conditions to keep the consumption of vehicles stable. China also plans to build several duty-free shops within the cities and improve related policies to develop pro-consumption platforms. Consumption is a primary engine for economic growth in China. In the first quarter, final consumption contributed 69.4 percent to the expansion in the gross domestic product, which rose 4.8 percent year on year. The sector is likely to continue rebounding as the country gets the epidemic situation under control and employment-friendly measures get implemented, said Fu Linghui, a spokesperson with the National Bureau of Statistics.

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## **Vice Premier Stresses Rectifying Problems in Consolidating Poverty-alleviation Achievements**

Chinese Vice Premier Hu Chunhua on Tuesday called for efforts to rectify all irregularities found in a national evaluation on the consolidation of poverty-alleviation

achievements. Hu, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, made the remarks while addressing a video conference in Beijing. The vice premier urged related departments to conduct thorough investigations and make a full list of the remaining problems and drawbacks, and formulate rectification plans accordingly. Local authorities involved in rural vitalization should perform their duties proactively, and seek to consolidate poverty-alleviation achievements by advancing rural development and increasing the incomes of those having shaken off poverty, Hu said. Hu added that these authorities should focus on speeding up the development of counties that have been lifted out of poverty and steadily raising the bottom-line social assistance. China launched a campaign nationwide between December 2021 and February 2022 to evaluate the work on aligning the efforts of consolidating and expanding poverty-alleviation achievements with rural vitalization endeavors. Evaluation results have come out.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 04/26/2022

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## **Vice Premier Stresses Importance of National Territory Spatial Planning**

Chinese Vice Premier Han Zheng on Wednesday called for efforts to ensure the high-quality completion of national territory spatial planning work. Han, also a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, made the remarks at a teleconference. He said that the pilot programs working toward this end launched by related departments and local governments have progressed well, noting that the work will be expanded nationwide. China specifically must prioritize ensuring its farmland area remains above the redline of 1.8 billion mu (about 120 million hectares). All tasks to protect arable land must be accomplished, Han said. Efforts should be made to consolidate achievements made in drawing ecological protection redlines, Han said, stressing that these lines must not be crossed. On drawing urban-rural boundaries, Han noted that the country needs to take into full consideration the carrying capacity of the population and resources, and set land construction quotas based on scientific analysis. China should also step up efforts to optimize the land use structure, Han said, underscoring the need for the frugal, economical use of land.

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## **JAPAN: AI-Based Imaging System Used to Detect Eye Diseases**

Artificial intelligence is beginning to find applications in the medical field in Japan. The development of AI-based diagnostic imaging systems is underway in the hope that it will lead to early detection of eye diseases. Ophthalmologists in particular rely on such images when diagnosing diseases. A group at Jichi Medical University led

by Associate Professor Takahashi Hidenori developed a system four years ago that can automatically recognize patterns in images of the eye. The system is capable of detecting traces of 100 eye diseases to allow doctors to make accurate diagnoses. Researchers say that when the system was introduced in hospital health checks, the time needed for a diagnosis was cut by two-thirds. They also say there have been fewer cases of overlooked diseases. A group at Hiroshima University led by contributing professor Tabuchi Hitoshi is developing a system that automatically recognizes whether a patient may develop diabetic retinopathy. The disease can cause blindness. When the system is applied to diabetes patients, it is expected to lead to the early detection of the disease. Artificial intelligence has yet to analyze imaging data with full precision, but researchers say they hope that progress in clinical studies will lead to the practical use of their system.

From <https://www3.nhk.or.jp> 04/18/2022

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## **Japan's Job Availability Improves for 1st Time in 3 Years in FY2021**

Japan saw the first improvement in its average job availability ratio in three years in fiscal 2021 on the back of the gradual economic recovery from the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, government data showed Tuesday. The job-to-applicant ratio for the year through March rose 0.06 point to 1.16, according to the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare. The ratio means there were 116 job openings for every 100 job seekers. But the figure was still low compared with prepandemic levels, which registered 1.55 in fiscal 2019 before the economy was affected by the emergence of the coronavirus. Separate government data showed the average jobless rate dropped 0.1 percentage point to 2.8 percent in fiscal 2021. The average number of unemployed people in fiscal 2021 decreased 80,000 from the previous year to 1.91 million and that of people in work grew 40,000 to 67.06 million, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications said.

"The situation in the fiscal year remained at a similar level to the previous year," an official of the internal affairs ministry said, adding it is still difficult to conclude whether the worst of the domestic labor issues have passed. By sector, notable increases of workers were observed in healthcare and welfare, up 180,000 from the previous year to 8.92 million, and in telecommunications, up 140,000 to 2.59 million, among others. There were on average 35.94 million regular workers in Japan each month in fiscal 2021, up 190,000 compared to the previous year, while there were 20.77 million nonregular workers, up 30,000, over the same period. Although the number of people who were temporarily absent from work fell 510,000 from the previous year to 2.11 million in fiscal 2021, Yuriko Shimanaka, an economist at Mizuho Research & Technologies Ltd, pointed out the figure is still high compared with prepandemic levels.

"Many likely avoided becoming jobless by taking a leave of absence," she said, adding the situation should continue to be carefully monitored. In March, the job availability ratio slightly improved to 1.22 from 1.21 in the previous month, up for the third consecutive month, the government said. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 2.6 percent in March, down 0.1 point from the previous month, improving for the second month in a row. Looking ahead, Shimanaka said Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine may pose a downside risk to Japan's labor market. "Corporate earnings may take a hit due to rising resource prices derived from the situation in Ukraine, and that could be a factor leading to a decrease in employment," Shimanaka said. It may take a while for the situation to return to prepandemic levels, she added.

From <https://japantoday.com> 04/27/2022

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## **SOUTH KOREA: Telecom's Digital Remastering Technology Supernova Going Global**

SK Telecom's artificial intelligence-powered digital remastering technology Supernova is going global in a new partnership with France's Verimatrix, a leading provider of content security solutions, the Korean telecom giant said Monday. Supernova aims to recreate digital content by using AI-powered colorization tool, called DeOldify. The technology has already been widely used in remastering classic content or restoring historic records here. Its smartphone app made its global debut at the MWC trade show in February. Verimatrix, listed on Amsterdam's Euronext exchange, is one of the top security solutions providers for digital content and connected devices that supplies its solutions to more than 1,000 telecom carriers and content creators around the world. Under the partnership, SK Telecom will recreate classic content owned by broadcasting stations or content producers, while Verimatrix will enhance the security of the remastered content. Their target markets include Latin America, Europe and Asia. "Through this partnership, we hope to introduce Supernova's competitiveness around the world," said Kim Hyuk, SK Telecom's global media support lead. "We will speed up our global expansion, contributing to the spread of K-content."

From <http://www.koreaherald.com> 04/18/2022

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## **Korea Develops World's 1st Fiber-Based White OLEDs**

South Korean researchers have developed the world's first fiber-based white organic light-emitting diodes, or WOLEDs, paving the way for more functional wearable tech, Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology said Wednesday. The research team came up with a single, dip-coated white emission layer suitable for a fiber structure to design the fiber-based WOLEDs. In doing so, the researchers figured out how to implement WOLEDs on a string of fiber through simulation and optimization of

the white spectra, according to KAIST, whose study was published in interdisciplinary premium open access journal *Advanced Science*. Prior to the study, putting WOLEDs on a string of fiber has been difficult as it was composed of a tandem structure, which is two to three times larger than a single-stacked structure of an OLED of three primary colors: red, yellow and blue.

KAIST said the fiber-based WOLEDs displayed strong lighting performance and reliable color index as well as stable durability in terms of sweat resistance, pressure resistance and biocompatibility. "As we developed an essential technology that was missing in the field of electronic fiber display, we expect that it will allow the realization of high-quality electronic fiber display," said Hwang Yong-ha, lead author of the research. Pointing out that WOLEDs are necessary for full-color display, the researchers said they expect the fiber-based WOLEDs to be utilized in various areas such as fashion, functional clothing and vehicle design. KAIST added that various efforts across the globe are being put into enhancing the technology of electronic fiber display as it could help redefine the wearable technology landscape.

From <http://www.koreaherald.com> 04/20/2022

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## **S. Korea Ranks 2nd Among OECD Nations in R&D Spending as Portion of GDP Report**

South Korea placed second in research and development (R&D) spending as a portion of its gross domestic product (GDP) among major developed countries in 2020, but its tepid growth in recent years calls for more policy support, a report said Wednesday. South Korea's R&D expenditures reached 93.1 trillion won (US\$75.4 billion) in 2020, accounting for 4.81 percent of GDP, according to a recent report by the Federation of Korean Industries (FKI), the country's largest business lobby. That made South Korea the biggest R&D spender among 36 out of 38 member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) trailing only Israel, whose R&D portion came to 5.44 percent, the report said. Chile was excluded from the finding due to limited available data. Costa Rica was also excluded from the report because it joined the Paris-based organization last year. The report also found that South Korea's R&D portion jumped 2.54 percentage points last year from 2011, a nearly fivefold increase compared with the OECD average of 0.53 percentage point.

Large companies spent 71.3 trillion won, representing the bulk of the expenditures, while 21.6 trillion won was spent by the government or other public entities. The R&D spending, however, has remained stalled at the average of around 7.5-8.0 percent in the past decade, retreating from the average 11.4 percent for 2001-2010. In 2018, South Korea ranked far below the OECD average in earnings from intellectual property royalties versus R&D spending, with the percentage coming to 9.9 percent, compared with the OECD's 27.7 percent. The FKI called for stronger policy support

for large enterprises, whose R&D spending makes up more than half of all corporate R&D investment. "The corporate R&D investment has a greater positive effect on the total factor productivity than government or public R&D," the report said. "It is necessary to revitalize domestic R&D by strengthening tax support for large corporations that are leading the private sector R&D," it said.

From <https://en.yna.co.kr> 04/20/2022

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## **S. Korea Develops World's 1st Computer to Save Data Without Power**

South Korean researchers have developed a computer that can save data even after the power is turned off, facilitating ways to reduce electric power consumption, the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology said Monday. The research team led by Jung Myoung-soo, an electrical engineering professor at KAIST, has invented the Lightweight Persistence Centric System or Light PC, which can retain data regardless of power supply, according to KAIST. KAIST said most existing computers use dynamic random access memory (DRAM) chips as the main memory storage unit. DRAM chips not only consume much more power, but lose data when the computer is shut down. In 2015, US tech firm Intel announced a product called Optane Memory, which is designed to store data when the computer is off. However, it cannot retain every piece of data because it runs too slow.

Data centers and other high-tech computers use a checkpointing technique that regularly transfers data to solid-state drives to prevent loss, but it takes extra time and energy consumption. It also requires rebooting the whole system after blackouts. Pointing out the fatal downsides of existing technologies, the research team said by using only persistent memory processors, Light PC doesn't need any rebooting process. Light PC users can also enjoy high performance like DRAM in using computer programs, thanks to technology that has minimized the data processing structure and maximized parallel computing. In parallel computing, many calculations or application processes can be done simultaneously. Compared to standard computer models, computers with Light PC can have 8 times larger memory and carry out 4.3 times more applications and programs.

"Based on large computer memory and reliable services, Light PC can help data centers or other facilities that use high-tech computers meet their net zero carbon emission goals," said Jung, adding that the computer takes up 73 percent less power than other models. Jung added the research technology can be applied to minimize battery consumption in vehicles, mobile phones and Internet of Things as well. In June, Jung's team will present the Light PC research paper at the International Symposium on Computer Architecture in New York. The research was sponsored by the Ministry of Science and ICT and the Institute for Information & Communication Technology Planning & Evaluation under the ministry. Other sponsors include the

state-run National Research Foundation of Korea and a next generation memory developer called Memray.

From <http://www.koreaherald.com> 04/25/2022

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## **Yoon Vows Full Vaccine Development Support**

President-elect Yoon Suk-yeol on Monday pledged to provide the utmost support for Korean companies developing vaccines and treatment, highlighting that vaccine development is crucial for securing the nation's economic security. "The essence of the country's growth lies here," Yoon said during his visit to SK Bioscience's headquarters in Seongnam, Gyeonggi Province, adding that South Korea's economy and security depend on developing drugs. The President-elect also vowed to offer enough financial backing for the private sector once his administration gets underway next month, hinting at easing regulations for drug developers if necessary. "If companies tell us that certain regulations make it difficult for them to do research and development, do business and secure international competitiveness and ask us to lift them, we will actively review them so that there is no inconvenience," Yoon said. Yoon's visit to SK Bioscience came as the biopharmaceutical firm announced final clinical trial results of its coronavirus vaccine candidate GBP510.

According to SK Bioscience, the drug developer confirmed GBP510's excellent immune response compared to Vaxzervria, the control vaccine formerly known as AstraZeneca, in the analysis of phase three clinical trials. For the study, a total of 4,037 adults aged 18 or older took part in six countries -- South Korea, Thailand, Vietnam, New Zealand, Ukraine and the Philippines. GBP510 can increase the amount of neutralizing antibodies when compared to the control vaccine, the company said, adding that it can better induce preventive effects by neutralizing COVID-19 infectivity. It added that the antibody conversion rate, which refers the proportion of people whose neutralizing antibodies increased more than four times after GBP510 inoculation among the participants in the clinical trials, was also significantly higher than that of the control vaccine. As SK Bioscience remains just steps away from completing the development of South Korea's first homegrown COVID-19 vaccine, the company plans to secure the safety data and apply for product authorization with the Ministry of Food and Drug Safety before the end of this month.

Once GBP510 gets the nod from the health authorities, S. Korea will become only the third country in the world to have developed its own COVID-19 treatment and vaccine after the US and UK. SK Bioscience previously signed a pre-contract deal with the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency for 10 million doses of GBP510 worth 200 billion won (\$165 million). With exporting the vaccine in mind, the biopharmaceutical firm has also submitted initial review documents for to the World Health Organization and the UK government's Medicines and Healthcare products



Regulatory Agency. An SK Bioscience official told The Korea Herald that the discussions on exporting GBP510 will begin to pick up the pace once it is approved by the Korean government. GBP510 was co-developed by SK Bioscience and the University of Washington's Institute for Protein Design with funding of over \$200 million from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations. "We will create a new turning point for the entire world's quarantine efforts through the successful development of GBP510. Further, we will fulfill our mission to establish Korea as a country with vaccine sovereignty," said SK Bioscience CEO Ahn Jae-yong.

From <http://www.koreaherald.com/> 04/25/2022

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## **S. Korea to Diversify Coal Import Channels, Boost Cement Production amid Supply Woes**

South Korea will diversify its import channels of soft coal and increase the production of cement to ease concerns over a supply shortage of the key construction material amid the ongoing crisis surrounding Ukraine, the top economic policymaker said Thursday. Global supply chains of bituminous coal, or soft coal, used to make cement, have been unstable due to the war in Ukraine, while domestic demand by builders has recently been on the rise. During an emergency economic response meeting, Finance Minister Hong Nam-ki said the government will continue to seek an increase in bituminous coal imports from Australia to reduce the dependence on Russia. The government also vowed to speed up the related customs clearance process, while enhancing the monitoring of the supply situation of cement and other major construction materials.

Russian coal accounted for around 62 percent of South Korea's total coal imports in the first quarter and that from Australia took up 38 percent. A year earlier, Russian coal accounted for 75 percent of Seoul's total imports, according to government data. Price of Russian soft coal jumped to US\$294.6 per ton in March from \$158.9 in January. "The government will encourage local companies to expand the production of major construction materials, including cement and rebar. We will also sternly deal with any illegal hoarding and price fixing," Hong said. Earlier this month, major domestic cement companies vowed to increase their production by 35.7 percent on-quarter for the next three months to 3.88 million tons combined. In a longer-term plan, the companies plan to reduce their dependence on soft coal to produce cement by using more eco-friendly materials, according to the industry ministry. The government vowed to earmark 930.6 billion won (US\$732.46 million) by 2030 starting next year to support such moves.

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## **THAILAND: Contributing to Further Regional Research and Analysis**

Thailand has contributed THB1,550,000 or around USD46,000 in funding to strengthen APEC's research and analysis arm, the APEC Policy Support Unit, in delivering objective and high-quality research, analytical and policy support capabilities to member economies. The contribution was confirmed by an official letter from Cherdchai Chaivaivid, Thailand's APEC Senior Official, and received by Dr Denis Hew, Director of the APEC Policy Support Unit, earlier this year. "Thailand commends the role of the Policy Support Unit that supports APEC 2022 Thailand's theme of 'Open. Connect. Balance.' and key priorities to deepen economic integration, reconnect the region to restart economic recovery, as well as promote post-COVID-19 economic growth that is inclusive, sustainable and balanced," said Cherdchai. Recognizing APEC's unique position as the premier forum for regional economic cooperation as well as a modern, efficient and effective incubator of ideas, he added that Thailand's financial contribution will support the operation of the Policy Support Unit to assist APEC member economies in the advancement of the Putrajaya Vision 2040 and the Aotearoa Plan of Action.

The APEC Policy Support Unit, established in 2007 by APEC Ministers, undertakes detailed research on various topics and produces research and policy analysis reports, policy briefs, issues papers as well as provides data, insights and commentary about economic issues within APEC. "We seek to engage and complement the work of other international organizations, policy think tanks and research institutes," said Dr Hew. "By pursuing opportunities for joint research and analysis, we endeavor to provide APEC members with wider resources and eventually help improve officials' deliberations and decisions in the forum." "The contribution from Thailand will help boost APEC's capability in regional research and analysis," Dr Hew concluded. The unit structures its policy research and analysis agenda into three core areas, namely: 1) trade and investment; 2) innovation and digitalization; and 3) strong, balanced, secure, sustainable and inclusive growth. These core research areas mirror the three economic drivers that are articulated in the Putrajaya Vision 2040.

*From <https://www.apec.org/> 04/01/2022*

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## **Govt Readies Two Lawsuits to Avoid Paying Huge Hopewell Fine**

The Transport Ministry and the State Railway of Thailand (SRT) are preparing two lawsuits against Hopewell (Thailand) Ltd to dodge having to pay billions of baht in compensation, a source at the ministry said on Monday. The move comes after the Supreme Administrative Court on March 4 accepted the government's request for a retrial of the Hopewell case – a two-decade-long legal battle over Bangkok's doomed multibillion-baht-mass-transit project. This retrial offers the Transport Ministry and

SRT fresh hope of escaping the Supreme Administrative Court's order to pay 25.4 billion baht in compensation for cancelling the 80-billion-baht elevated highway and railway project. The source said that apart from preparing for the retrial, the Transport Ministry and SRT are also getting two lawsuits ready to invalidate the establishment of Hopewell in Thailand. The first lawsuit will be filed at the Civil Court seeking a ruling on whether the Hopewell project violated the National Executive Council Announcement No 281, which requires companies to be qualified and approved by the Cabinet before conducting business in Thailand. The Transport Ministry has assigned this case to Thanatdet Khamchu, an attorney for special civil cases at the Office of the Attorney General. The second case will be filed by SRT against the registrar of the Bangkok Office of the Central Company and Partnership Registration, who did not object to the registration of Hopewell (Thailand) even though it was in violation of the announcement. The Central Administrative Court had earlier ruled to dismiss this case, but SRT is planning to appeal the ruling at the Supreme Administrative Court. This case will be overseen by SRT lawyer Nitithorn Lamleur. Transport Minister Saksayam Chidchob has said the ministry's and SRT's legal teams are preparing to file the cases within this month. "The ministry is confident that from the evidence at hand we can 100 per cent win the cases and protect the country's interest," the source quoted Saksayam as saying.

*From <https://www.nationthailand.com> 04/19/2022*

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## **Govt Takes Steps to Control Surging Price of Consumer Goods**

The Commerce Ministry and other related agencies have been tasked with launching measures to mitigate the rising price of basic necessities. "The prime minister has also urged them to monitor the price of consumer goods closely to ensure people are not being taken advantage of," government spokesman Thanakorn Wangboonkongchana said on Sunday. He said the government, especially the Commerce Ministry, is doing its best to control the price of basic consumer products. Thanakorn added that the Commerce Ministry will add another 20 venues in Bangkok where goods can be bought at a fixed price. The capital already has 50 such venues. Also, he said, 25 grocery trucks or "pumpuang" will be deployed across the capital to sell basic necessities such as chicken, eggs, sugar, rice, vegetable oil, instant noodles, canned fish, soap and toothpaste at cheap prices. Provincial Commercial Offices have also set up venues where basic goods are sold cheaply, he said.

*From <https://www.nationthailand.com> 04/24/2022*

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## **VIETNAM: Ministry Sets Up 5 Zones for Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries**

HCM City is joining hands with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to

establish five areas exclusively for agriculture, forestry or fisheries in 13 provinces at a cost of VNĐ2.46 trillion (US\$107 million) by 2025. The country's agricultural sector has yet to realise its full potential, experts said, pointing out that production and consumption still rely heavily on a few markets, climatic conditions and other factors that limit capacity. The dependence on the climate and prevalence of diseases pose a threat. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on agricultural production and supply chains. Agriculture has not developed sustainably or taken advantage of technology and digital transformation. The export market is not diversified and relies heavily on a few markets. Thus, earmarking areas for farming raw material is considered the ideal solution to improve the value of products and ensure adequate supply for domestic consumption and export. Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Trần Thanh Nam said agriculture is inefficient because of small holdings and the impact of climate change. It leads to low quality and competitiveness and high post-harvest losses, and thus low incomes for farmers.

The ministry has co-ordinated with the 13 provinces to establish the five areas on a total area of 166,800 ha. They will include areas for growing passion fruit, pineapple and mango in Hòa Bình and Sơn La provinces, timber in Quảng Trị and Thừa Thiên-Huế, coffee in Gia Lai, Đắk Lắk, Đắk Nông, and Kon Tum, rice in Kiên Giang and An Giang, and mango, jackfruit and durian in Đồng Tháp, Tiền Giang and Long An. Their targets include reducing input costs by 5-10 per cent, post-harvest losses by 5-10 per cent and increasing product value by 10-20 per cent, thus increasing incomes by 5-10 per cent for 186,280 co-operative members and other farmers participating in the project. Phạm Thái Bình, general director of Trung An Hi-tech Agriculture Joint Stock Company, said he expected these raw material areas to help businesses improve their supply of farm produce materials and link more closely with farmers. He pointed out that last year Vietnamese enterprises only exported 60,000 tonnes of rice out of the EU's tax-free quota of 80,000 tonnes due to insufficient supply.

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 04/04/2022*

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## **HCM City Keeps Smart City Status in Sights**

The digital transformation successes achieved so far by HCM City will propel its progress towards becoming a smart city this year, officials say. They note in particular that digital applications played an important role in the city's fight against COVID-19 last year. According to the municipal Department of Information and Communication, digital transformation helped forge useful tools in the fight such as a digital map to monitor cases and the spread of the novel coronavirus, or the city-wide use of QR codes to verify vaccination and recovery status. The city's 1022 COVID-19 hotline also played a big part in providing timely healthcare advice to patients and assisting those affected by COVID-19. During the pandemic's peak, the hotline received over 80,000 calls a day. HCM City has one of the highest smartphone

penetration rates in the country, with city-wide internet and 3G, 4G coverage. Local departments have launched numerous mobile applications in many fields including traffic management, healthcare provision and urban planning. At the start of March the city issued a plan to facilitate the city's digital transformation process and become a smart city this year by staying focused on digital government, administrative reforms and artificial intelligence (AI) application. It will facilitate e-commerce and internet payment, and help small- to medium-sized enterprises get access to digital applications to manage their businesses. The department is working with health authorities to perfect the city's electronic health profile database. The city also plans to launch several smart city services this year. For example, the department will introduce an Integrated Service Portal, which will combine many state public services together onto a single web page and mobile application, and locals can easily keep track of how their inquiries are being processed. HCM City is also working on a system to gather and analyse local opinions on social media using AI to help city leaders come up with appropriate solutions and adjustments.

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 04/20/2022*

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## **Regulatory Sandbox for P2P Lending Needs Strict Requirements**

Early this month, the State Bank of Việt Nam (SBV) announced a new draft decree providing a controlled testing mechanism (sandbox) for fintech activities in the banking industry. This is the second draft that have been built to gather public opinions for this sector. One content which has been drawing big attention is regulatory sandbox for peer-to-peer (P2P) lending. According to the central bank, the rapid development of fintech has posed many challenges to financial authorities in managing, supervising, ensuring security and safeguarding interests of consumers and investors. The number of fintech companies has grown quickly from about 40 at the end of 2016 to around 200 now, operating in various fiends such as payment, P2P lending, cryptocurrency and personal asset management, of which payment and P2P lending are dominating the market. "Most of these fields have not been fully regulated, posing new risks to healthy competition, financial stability, data security and client interests," the SBV said.

In the P2P lending activity that has emerged in Việt Nam in recent years, the banking watchdog has warned some firms use the name of P2P lending model to deceive people who lack information, advertise falsely such as high profits, high interest rates to cheat, appropriate people's money to invest in this model or deceive borrowers about low interest rates, easy lending conditions while applying "exorbitantly high" actual interest rate. Currently, about 100 firms including foreign-invested ones are offering P2P lending services in Việt Nam. According to SBV's definition, P2P lending providers only act as an intermediary to connect borrowers and lenders through their platforms. In the absence of regulations, loans on P2P platforms would be considered as civil transactions under the 2015 Civil Code with the interest rate not

exceeding 20 per cent of the principal per year. However in reality, many lending apps operate like a credit institution when mobilising capital from organisations and individuals and then lending at “exorbitant high” interest rates of up to 300-400 per cent per year.

Currently, most P2P platform providers in Việt Nam have registered their business activities as investment consultation, commodity auction services, brokerage or IT services. Many agreements between the parties involved in the P2P lending model (P2P lending firms, investors, borrowers, third parties) lack clarity and binding due to under regulation so it may lead to disputes, lawsuits or even swindling. According to financial expert Nguyễn Trí Hiếu, if managed closely, P2P lending can reduce the burden on banks because this model serves subprime loans – a segment that banks cannot accommodate due to compliance conditions and strict regulations according to the Law on Credit Institutions. However, in the past, due to the lack of regulations, this sector operates like a black credit market. “Many P2P lending companies mobilise capital and lend like a credit institution. So in the pilot testing mechanism, the SBV needs to control this situation,” Hiếu said. He suggested that in the pilot mechanism, it is necessary to carefully select the companies participating in this field with strict requirements on financial capacity, insurance percentage and loan limit to minimise risks on the society.

### **Tighten management**

Currently, many governments advocate strict management of P2P lending. The US forbids P2P platforms from crediting the borrower’s loan directly to the lender, while China, after a period of relaxed experimentation, banned P2P lending after the default crisis in 2018 and 2019. Looking at the bursting of the P2P lending bubble in China, Indonesia has also tightened management of this model, setting strict capital, registration and licensing requirements. In Việt Nam, the sandbox introduction aims to get first-hand experience in managing the sector and allow fintech firms to test their novel products in a regulatory environment. As a result, the SBV will allow some risks in the sandbox to gain a better understanding of the dangers, thereby building a full-fledged legal framework that encourages innovation, prevents financial risk and promotes financial stability. According to the draft, P2P lending companies participating in the pilot mechanism may not perform the following acts, including providing loan security, providing brokerage services for borrowing money for stock investments and other high-risk activities, unauthorised use of funds from customers.

Founders, managers in the P2P lending company must not take advantage of their position to commit fraudulent acts, appropriate customers’ assets. The draft decree also states that P2P lending firms must have a customer protection mechanism. Guidelines must be issued and provided to the customers to advise against the risks of participating in the use of the solution during the pilot period, as well as setting up a dispute settlement department. In the draft, the trial period for fintech solutions is up to two years, depending on the specific solution and field. According to experts, in

addition to providing an additional channel to access capital for people, it is still necessary to manage and limit risks for society and borrowers and lenders. Besides the loan limit regulation, the SBV needs to manage data, even have a server that connects directly to the floors of P2P lending businesses.

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## Ministry of Transport Announces 10 New Seaports

Ten new ports have been added to the list of Vietnamese seaports, bringing the total number nationwide to 296. The Ministry of Transport has just issued Decision No 552/QĐ-BGTVT announcing the list of ports belonging to Vietnamese seaports. Newly-added ports are Nosco port in Quảng Ninh seaport; Long Sơn general port belongs to Nghi Sơn seaport; Hải Hà – Quảng Trị petroleum port; Pacific Petro international petroleum port in Tiền Giang Province; Tân Cảng Giao Long port in Bến Tre province; Duyên Hải 2 thermal power plant port in Trà Vinh province. In addition, two ports of Vũng Tàu seaport have also been added, Cái Mép Gemadept - Terminal Link port and Cái Mép general port. In Hải Phòng, VIMC Đình Vũ wharf and FGG specialised wharf are also added to this list. Some seaport areas have a large number of ports, including Hải Phòng with 52 berths and Vũng Tàu with 48 berths. The Việt Nam Maritime Administration said that the port system stretching from the North to the South have been promoting their role as a hub for goods trade in the context of the country's deep integration. Data from the Việt Nam Maritime Administration has just been released showing that the volume of goods through the seaports maintained its upward momentum in the first three months of this year, reaching nearly 180 million tonnes, up 4 per cent over the same period last year, container cargo maintained a steady increase of 6 per cent over the same period, reaching 6.2 million TEUs (tonne equivalent unit).

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## New COVID-19 Adaptation Programme for Social Impact Businesses

The Agency of Enterprise Development (AED) under the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) jointly launched today the “COVID-19 Adaptation Programme” for social impact businesses (SIBs) to increase their capacity and refine business models to address the challenges they are facing. The number of COVID-19 cases in Việt Nam is decreasing but the adverse effects of COVID-19 on businesses, especially those led by vulnerable groups, are still prolonged and damaging. A UNDP study in August last year showed that household businesses and micro, small and medium enterprises found their revenue declined sharply, forcing them to cut back operations and lay off workers. Enterprises in tourism, restaurants, hotels and



passenger transportation were those hardest hit. This impact is exacerbated among female-headed households. “This support package will contribute to helping SIBs remove the above bottlenecks and difficulties through concrete actions, such as sending experts and intermediary organisations to accompany SIBs for six months to solve specific problems in management, business, and product development,” said Lê Mạnh Hùng, general director of MPI’s Agency for Enterprise Development.

Especially, the COVID-19 Adaptation Programme also provided seed funding of VNĐ100 million (nearly US\$4,350) for each enterprise to build and test new business models. This was a very valuable resource for SIBs amid difficult access to financial resources, he added. UNDP Resident Representative in Việt Nam Caitlin Wiesen commended Việt Nam for its rapid and equitable roll-out of the vaccination programme, bringing the country back to normal life. However, she is concerned about the adverse effects of COVID-19 on businesses. “Our baseline assessment showed that nearly 47 per cent of interviewed social impact businesses had their revenue reduced due to COVID-19. Businesses with the highest percentage of revenue reduction belonged to the groups employing people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and co-operatives,” said Wiesen. We hoped that the programme would provide the necessary technical and financial support for the SIBs to realise their innovative ideas to solve their own challenges, thus benefiting vulnerable groups, she added.

As the flagship support for SIBs in the “Leveraging Việt Nam’s Social Impact Business Ecosystem in Response to COVID-19”- ISEE-COVID project, the Covid-19 Adaptation Programme is expected to help SIBs to identify critical challenges due to COVID-19; design new business models or develop new products and services to adapt to COVID-19; and build and test prototypes of products and services with the seed funds. The programme will support 30 SIBs in the agriculture and tourism industries this year, focusing on the SIBs led by women and vulnerable groups. Each selected SIB will receive a six-month coaching service and funding of VNĐ100 million to identify, build and test the prototypes or new business models. The AED, GAC, and UNDP encourage eligible social impacted businesses to submit expressions of interest to participate in the programme. All social enterprises, impact start-ups, co-operatives, and small and medium enterprises that work with or work for the vulnerable groups, in the agricultural and tourism sectors, are welcome to apply for the programme. There is no restriction on population group, occupation, or geographical location as long as the businesses support vulnerable groups and the proposed business models, and new products and services are innovative, sustainable, scalable, and relevant to adapt to the challenges of COVID-19.

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 04/29/2022*

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**South Asia**



## **INDIA: Rural Innovator, Known for Re-glowing the Dead Tubelights Innovates Technology to Kill SARS-CoV**

We are all living in challenging times due to the on-going pandemic and has posed serious health issues around the world. Researchers including Virologists and WHO itself believe that coronavirus is pandemic and have warned that the world would have to live with it forever. A lot of researchers have put in efforts to find ways to control the virus through vaccines and other measures but these all are not sufficient and do not have a high efficacy rate. Understanding the need for a safe alternative, Narishma Chary Mandaji, a rural innovator who is known for re-glowing the dead tubelights, after extensive research and experiments, has come up with a technology which is capable of killing all sorts of viruses including the SARS-CoV. His technology has been imbibed in Instashield, a break through innovative Medical Device, which uses first of its kind CCMB approved Virus attenuation technology that disables all kind of virus including SARS- CoV2) up to 99.9% efficacy in an enclosed space, in air, and on the surfaces. Instashield is a plug and play device that delivers the necessary signals to the electron emitters producing hypercharge high velocity electrons, which interact with the negative seeking s-protein of the corona family of viruses, thus, reducing infectivity and preventing air and surface borne transmission of the corona family of viruses. Its hyper charged cannons fire trillions (1-100 trillion electrons per second) of negatively charged ions, creating an electron cloud across closed spaces. A single device has an effective coverage area starting 5,000 square feet and activates within 18 minutes of time. Instashield Medical Device is a Patent Technology backed by science and has received support from TSIC, ARCI and is an accredited lab tested and certified by CSIR-CCMB and other labs like EMTAC, Vimta, with CE for exports CDSCO, ISO 13485:2016, thus ensuring that it is 100% safe for humans and environment. The brand is registered with MSME, Start-up India and GEM portal with Go green as a sustainable product.

Talking about Instashield, Hitesh M Patel, Founder & Director, Instashield says, “As per the WHO reports SARS-CoV is pandemic and our lives will be with it forever. Hence, we need an alternative which has no side effects and has the maximum efficacy to kill any sort of virus. Thus, the technology created by Mr. Chary is a perfect fit in the current and coming times. Therefore, we thought of investing in the technology and giving it a form of a physical product, called Instashield, that can be used at multiple places such as Schools, Colleges, offices, Banks, Hospitals, Clinics, conference rooms, etc. We intend to take Instashield in the domestic as well as global markets”. “Since last 2 years, there has been a peak and low in the on-going Coronavirus threat and is rapidly evolving mutations like Alpha, Gamma, Beta, Delta, Omicron, Delta Plus and recently the WHO has stated that the new COVID-19 variant dubbed Deltacron has been circulating in parts of Europe, USA, China, which is shortly expected to hit other parts of the world including India. And before it takes a serious turn, Instashield, a disruptive medical device, made in India, can save many lives across the globe”, adds Patel. Narsimha Mandaji Chary, the innovator said,

“From the time SARS-CoV hit the world, I had been relentlessly working on building a technology that can fight this as well as other viruses. I am happy that my efforts have now taken the shape of a divine technology which is now finally going to be of use to mankind”.

From <https://news.siliconindia.com> 04/05/2022

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## **Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav Launches Mascot ‘Prakriti’ & Plastic Waste Management Initiatives**

The Union Minister of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Bhupender Yadav launched ‘Prakriti’, a mascot to spread greater awareness among the masses about small changes that can be sustainably adopted in our lifestyle for a better environment. Also, various green initiatives taken by the Ministry and Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) to ensure effective Plastic Waste Management (PWM) in the country, were launched. Minister of State, Ashwini Kumar Choubey and other senior officials of the government were present at the occasion. To tackle the challenge of plastic pollution, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced India’s pledge to phase out Single-Use Plastics (SUPs) by 2022. Taking the momentum forward and stressing the need for active public participation, the Union Minister for Environment, Forest & Climate Change also administered the ‘Swachh Bharat Harit Bharat Green Pledge’ to the gathering. Plastic has become one of the most pressing environmental issues we face today. India is generating about 3.5 Million Tonnes of plastic waste annually and the per capita plastic waste generation has almost doubled over the last five years. Plastic Pollution adversely affects our ecosystems and is also linked to air pollution. Bhupender Yadav urged everyone to join in the efforts to beat plastic pollution and work towards a better future. He appreciated the innovative solutions developed by start-ups entrepreneurs and students in India Plastic Challenge–Hackathon 2021 highlighting the immense talent and potential of India’s youth. Further, he informed us about the recently released IPCC Working Group III contribution to the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report (AR6), which focuses on mitigation measures to keep the world aligned to the Plastic Waste Management goals and what we can do to remain on the roadmap set by the Paris Agreement. In conclusion, the Union Minister said that India sends a message of hope and optimism that humanity can meet the challenges posed by climate change and will be a part of the solution to climate change. Earlier, in Nairobi, the Union Minister had appreciated the efforts of MoEFCC and CPCB in launching e-governance portals & apps intended to ease issues related to Plastic Waste Management (PWM).

The Minister of State, Ashwini Kumar Choubey in his address said that the e-Governance portals of MoEFCC and CPCB such as the EPR portal and the mobile app for SUP grievance redressed launched today would go a long way in ensuring the complete phase-out of the single-use plastic and realize the vision of our Prime Minister. He said that the success of any initiative lies in collective action and

responsibility. He stated that a Jan Andolan is the need of the hour for phasing out Single-Use Plastic with 'SabkaSaath, SabkaVikas' as underscored by the Prime Minister. During the event, the following green initiatives for plastic waste management were launched: National Dashboard on Elimination of Single-Use Plastic and Plastic Waste Management was launched to bring all stakeholders including Central Ministries/ Departments, State/UT Governments at one place and track the progress made for the elimination of single-use plastic (SUP) and effective management of plastic waste. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Portal for Plastic Packaging was rolled out for improving accountability, traceability, transparency and to facilitate ease of reporting compliance to EPR obligations by producers, importers and brand owners. To empower citizens to check sale/usage/manufacturing of SUP in their area, Mobile App for Single-Use Plastics Grievance Redressal was launched at the occasion. This also helps in tackling the plastic menace.

A monitoring module for SUP was launched for local bodies, SPCBs/PCCs and CPCB, to do an inventory of details of SUP production/ sale & usage in commercial establishments at the district level and on-ground enforcement of the ban on SUP. Industrial production of Graphene from Waste Plastic to promote more industries to come forward to upcycle plastic waste. The event also saw the felicitation of the winners of the India Plastic Challenge–Hackathon 2021. Three Startups/entrepreneurs category and four teams of students from Higher Education Institutions were awarded cash prizes of Rs 5 lakh and Rs 1 Lakh respectively for their innovative ideas and digital solutions for plastic waste mitigation and elimination of Single-Use Plastics. Later, an exhibition on Plastic Waste Management showcasing SUP alternatives and technology solutions was inaugurated along with a newly established Fitness Centre and Daycare Facility for children of CPCB employees. A visit to CPCB laboratories and interaction with the Scientists was also held. The event witnessed participation from across the domain of plastic waste management including international organizations, research institutes, industry associations, Plastic Manufacturer Associations, Cement Manufacturers Association, civil society, young inventors & entrepreneurs, senior officials from MoEFCC& other concerned ministries and departments, Board Members of CPCB and virtual participation from Chairmen and Member Secretaries of State Pollution Control Boards and Pollution Control Committees and IROs.

From <https://smartcity.eletsonline.com> 04/06/2022

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## **Facial Recognition Technology at 4 Airports to Be Implemented by March 2023**

Four airports in the country will have facial recognition technology (FRT) for passengers by March 2023. Facial recognition System, which is a part the Digi Yatra initiative of the government, will be implemented in a phased manner. The Ministry of

Civil Aviation, said, "The first phase is planned at Kolkata, Varanasi, Pune, Vijayawada, Bangalore, Delhi and Hyderabad Airports by March 2023" Preliminary testing of the Digi Yatra Biometric boarding system with registration for the 'day of travel' at these airports has been completed, the ministry said. The project reportedly will cost Rs. 165.43 crore to the government. The Digi Yatra initiative aims to enhance passenger experience and provide a simple and easy experience to all air travelers by delivering paperless and hassle-free experience to all passengers across all check-points at all Indian airports. The goal of the initiative is to set the standards & standard operating procedures (SOPs) for digital transformation of the Indian Aviation Industry.

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## **BMTC Launches Mobile App-Based Digital Passes for Commuters**

In a noteworthy move toward making passengers' experience hassle-free and convenient, the Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) launched mobile-based digital passes for commuters. As per a report by a national daily, from now on, the commuters can purchase daily, weekly or monthly passes through a mobile app. BMTC officials are of the view that the move will benefit by making the commuting experience hassle-free for passengers with cashless, paperless as well as contactless transactions. Commuters can get passes at their fingertips. Further, the officials revealed that after purchasing the pass, the user can check the validity of the digital pass. also, the pass is generated with a unique ID, validity as well as dynamic QR code. When the commuters on board a bus, they have to show their digital pass to the conductor for validation. The conductor will validate the pass using an electronic ticketing machine.

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## **UP Govt to Create Amrit Sarovars in All the Districts for Groundwater Management**

In another innovative attempt toward conservation of groundwater, its better management and usage, the Yogi Adityanath-led Government of Uttar Pradesh will conduct the exercise of excavation and rejuvenation of 'Amrit Sarovars' (ponds) in each of the 75 districts of the state. Chairing a high-level meeting with senior officials on Tuesday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath instructed, "To mark the 'Amrit Kaal', 'Amrit Sarovars' should be excavated or rejuvenated in each of the 75 districts. This will not only regulate the groundwater level but also will give a boost to local tourism." In pursuance of the directives of the CM, a total of 5625 ponds would be coming up in 75 districts, which will be termed as 'Amrit Sarovars'. He has directed that neglected ponds should be identified in all the districts for 'Amrit Sarovar'. Where there are no

ponds, new ponds should be dug on the government land. In case of any inconvenience in getting at least 75 ponds ready in smaller districts like Shravasti and Sant Kabir Nagar or in every district of Bundelkhand, then the number of ponds in bigger districts should be increased to meet the target. To carry out the exercise of rejuvenation of ponds, local public representatives will also be involved in arranging labour and providing employment. According to the instructions of the CM, proper arrangements will also be made for the maintenance of these ponds. There will be clear provisions in the action plan to ensure that dirty water does not contaminate the pond. If there are aquatic animals in the ponds, measures will be taken, accordingly. In addition, sailing will also be done in them as per convenience. It is noteworthy that continuous efforts are being made by the central and state government to improve the depleting groundwater level. With schemes like Atal Bhujal Yojana, the situation has improved a lot, while stringent laws have also been implemented to check unnecessary exploitation of groundwater.

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## **Varanasi Smart City Awarded in 4 Categories at India Smart City Award**

The Varanasi Smart City has been awarded in four different categories in the India Smart City Award Contest, organised by the Ministry of Urban and Housing Affairs, Government of India at Surat, Gujarat. The chief guest of the programme was Hardeep Singh Puri, Minister for Urban Development and Housing, Government of India. The first award given to the Varanasi Smart City was the “COVID Innovation Award”. During the outbreak of the COVID pandemic and the strict lockdown that followed, the Kashi Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC) functioned as the “Integrated War Room” for the city of Varanasi, where District Administration, Emergency Services, Health Department, Telemedicine, Municipal Corporation-related facilities; Food & Civil Supplies, etc. were integrated under one roof. The tracking of contaminated zones, cluster mapping, etc. was also done by Geographical Information System (GIS). Apart from this, the works of sanitisation of containment zones and medicine delivery by Drones, Safe Kashi App, City Surveillance, Hospital Monitoring, etc. were also done by Kashi ICCC under the Varanasi Smart City project. Varanasi Smart City has also been awarded the “Smart City Leadership Award” for its efficient functioning and proper implementation of the projects, the “City Award” in the cities to be selected in the second phase and in “Water Category” for water conservation. After being awarded, Municipal Commissioner & CEO, Varanasi Smart City, Pranay Singh said that it is a matter of great pride that Varanasi Smart City has been awarded in four different categories in the India Smart City Award contest. Chief General Manager Dr D. Vasudevan described this award as the award of all Kashi and conveyed his best wishes to all the residents of Kashi. Those who were present on the occasion included the Minister of State, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India,

Kaushal Kishore and several other ministers. From Varanasi Smart City, Pranay Singh, Dr D. Vasudevan, Public Relations Officer Shakambhari Nandan Sonthalia and other team officers were present.

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## **India's Northeast Gets First Rated-4 Datacenter**

The Honourable IT Minister of Assam, Shri. Keshab Mahanta today laid the foundation stone of the Rated-4 Datacenter, first major IT investment in Assam by CtrlS Datacenters Ltd – Asia's Largest Rated-4 Data Center in Tech City Park, Guwahati in the presence of Shri. Himanta Biswa Sarma, Chief Minister of Assam, Shri. Ramendra Narayan Kalita, Chairman, Amtron, Shri. Sridhar Pinnapureddy, Founder and CEO, CtrlS Datacenters, and Shri. Anurag Goyal, IAS, Principal Secretary, Assam. As a part of its commitment to accelerate the Digital India initiative, CtrlS has been expanding its data center footprint across the metros, secondary metros and deploying edge data centers in tier-2, tier-3 and tier-4 cities across the country. CtrlS' expansion into Assam is aligned with "Digital Assam" initiative of Government of Assam to transform the State into a digitally empowered society and knowledge hub for better economy by increasing digital literacy rate in rural area, spreading penetration of internet connectivity up to household level, making Government services and information easily available through digital devices to the citizens and bringing efficiency and transparency in governance using Information Technology. The company is setting up its Rated-4 Datacenter in Guwahati to provide best-in-class colocation services for cloud, e-commerce, digital payment, digital classroom, OTT, CDN, ISPs, smart cities etc to support the Government of Assam, enterprises, and SMEs across the Northeast through its data center and related technology services such as colocation, private/hybrid cloud, managed services, work area recovery, business continuity, disaster recovery, SD-WAN, connectivity services, bringing speedy connectivity to netizens in Assam and Northeast India.

Shri. Himanta Biswa Sarma, Honourable Chief Minister of Assam, said "India, in many ways, is at the forefront of the digital revolution and it is my vision that the State of Assam will play an important role and be a visionary and lead the digitization journey in the country. Our government aims to digitally empower every citizen, accelerate economic competitiveness, boost local innovation, enhance quality of life of citizens and become a knowledge and technology hub of the country. We are happy that CtrlS too shares our vision and is working closely with us to reach our desired goals." Honourable IT Minister of Assam, Shri. Keshab Mahanta during the stone laying ceremony said, "I am delighted that CtrlS, Asia's Largest Rated-4 Hyperscale Data Center is setting up its data center facility in Guwahati aimed at helping process data closer to the end-user, powered by lower latency and high speed. The company will play a key role in enabling real-time data processing of

applications such as internet of things, OTT, cloud ecosystems, autonomous vehicles, telecommunications, smart cities, digital factories, telemedicine, connected networks among others. CtrlS will add economic value to the State of Assam besides attracting local talent for its data center expansion. It will also attract other global technology players host their data and applications locally". He further added, "The vision outlined by our Honourable Chief Minister will help harness the power of digital transformation to accelerate economic growth and social progress in the State. We are happy to have CtrlS onboard as our partner and we are certain to benefit from the experience and expertise CtrlS brings through the numerous data center projects it has undertaken globally. We are also planning to release the most investor-friendly State DC policy in India in the next few days, which should help attract more investors." The company's new data center in Guwahati will be spread over three acres and will have a capacity to host around 1,000+ racks initially. The rack capacity will be enhanced to 2,000+ racks in the next 12-18 months.

During the ceremony, Shri. Sridhar Pinnapureddy, Founder and CEO, CtrlS Datacenters said, "We are proud to be associated with the State Government of Assam and work together towards furthering the Digital Assam initiative and thank the Chief Minister of Assam, Shri. Himanta Biswa Sarma, and IT Minister of Assam, Shri. Keshab Mahanta for the extraordinary support being extended to us in bringing the Rated-4 data center in Assam. At CtrlS, we stay committed to build world-class data center infrastructure in the State of Assam and Northeast India and provide best-in-class services to the government, enterprises, small and medium enterprises by bringing the applications closer to the end-users in the State and the northeastern region." CtrlS is Asia's Largest Rated-4 Data Center provider with over 1.2 million square feet of footprint spread across its data centers in Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore and Hyderabad. The company is currently expanding its footprint to 5 million square feet by adding 2 million square feet in Mumbai, 2 million square feet in Hyderabad and another 1 million square feet in Chennai. The company is trusted by 60 of the Fortune 500 Global Multinationals including some of the most reputed brands such as Exxon Mobil, Walmart, Bank of America, Standard Chartered, Morgan Stanley, Chrysler, Disney, HSBC, Samsung, Honda, FedEx, Panasonic, KIA, Hyundai, SAP and Vodafone.

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## **7 New Ropeways to Improve Connectivity & Tourism in Himachal Pradesh**

Himachal Pradesh will get seven ropeway projects of a total length of 57.1 km at the cost of Rs 3,232 crore in a bid to improve last-mile connectivity and tourism in the state. National Highways Logistics Management Limited (NHLML) and the Himachal government have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for the building of multiple ropeways in the state under the presence of the Union Minister for Road



Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari along with Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh Jai Ram Thakur, and MoS V. K. Singh. The ropeways will be established by leveraging world-class technology. The project is a part of the 'Parvatmala initiative. With the objective to improve connectivity, the initiative emphasises on ecologically sustainable alternative in place of conventional roads in difficult hilly areas. As an effective mode of transportation, the government has decided to construct ropeways for hilly areas.

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## **City Beautiful Meets Smartness Inspires a Way of Life**

Sprawling at the foothills of the Shivalik range in North India, the country's most beautiful city, Chandigarh, is setting an example for other cities to follow as it strengthens its commitment to a greener and cleaner environment, writes Priya Yadav of Elets News Network (ENN). Known for its thick sylvan cover, the city which is independent India's first planned urban-dwelling designed by world-famed French-Swiss architect Le Corbusier, is taking back to back initiatives to impact the environment positively. Backed by its highly aware population, most of who passionately share their love for the planet, the Chandigarh Administration has launched a series of highly significant eco-friendly initiatives. The city's administration launched the "Chandigarh Climate Change Monitoring Dashboard" on 12 April, which was developed by the union territories environment department in collaboration with Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu, India to monitor climate change resilience actions in the city. Adviser to the Administrator, Dharam Pal, who launched the platform said that this platform will help in making climate- sensitive decisions for Chandigarh by highlighting actionable issues and areas that need to be worked upon to combat climate change. The dashboard has been developed under the "Smart Urban Development in the Indian States (SmUDI)" programme funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Government of United Kingdom. Caroline Rowett, British Deputy High Commissioner, Chandigarh, said the platform would facilitate the development of a common reporting framework to enable effective decision- making in the domain of climate change resilience in the city.

UT environment secretary Nitin Kumar Yadav said that the need of the hour was to integrate data with information already available through other automated platforms developed by the administration, such as the Integrated Command Control Centre, SCADA and others, which may aid in taking more proactive actions and solutions to combat climate change. Debendra Dalai, director, the environment, Chandigarh Administration, said this would greatly help the city administration align with global and national reporting requirements that include the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Climate Smart Cities Assessment Framework by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA). Concerned over the overwhelmingly large number of vehicles plying on the wide roads, the city



administration has been working for the past decade on introducing cycling as an alternate way of commuting. "Promotion of cycling as a means of travelling is one of the policy tools that can contribute to sustainable urban travel. Cycling nowadays is attracting international attention as an environmentally friendly, clean, sustainable mode of transport, since the bicycle does not pollute or create noise and it has the potential to be an alternative to cars for short-distance travel in urban areas," as per the draft framed on cycling policy in the city. For this, the city has developed a vast impressive network of cycle tracks that run the length and breadth of the city. To encourage people to pedal their way to work, special incentives like half-a-day earned leave credited for every seven days cycled, or half-a-day casual leave granted every week, commendation certificates, awards for using a cycle to commute, are some of the incentives being considered.

The policy focuses not just on incentives for employees cycling to work but also on upgrading infrastructure to encourage cyclists. It was stated that each government or private workspace must have a separate policy to encourage commuting to work by cycle. Facilities such as a cycle parking space with roof, shower rooms and space for drying cycling clothes, cycles for borrowing for short trips from the office, etc. should be offered. The city will get 1250 new cycles and 155 more docking stations under the third phase of the public bike-sharing project in June. The second phase of the public-bike sharing project was launched in February when a total of 1250 new bicycles were added. At present, a total of 2,500 bicycles are being provided at 310 docking stations in the city. There is a plan to take the count of bicycles to 5,000 and that of docking stations to 617 in a year. The project is being implemented and operated by Smart Bike Tech Pvt. Ltd, Hyderabad, for a period of 10 years on a public-private partnership (PPP) basis. In 2015, British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) dubbed Chandigarh the "most ideal city in the world" that has stood the test of time. The city that was born out of the pangs of partition that India suffered at the time of independence has been preserved passionately by its administration. An annual assessment as part of the government's Greening Chandigarh Action Plan shows that 1.6 lakh trees are planted annually over the last 14 years. This has made the city with the highest number of trees per hectare of a culturable non-forest area in the country.

In March 2022, Union Home Minister Amit Shah launched a string of initiatives that he said would make Chandigarh the "country's most disciplined and modern city." He launched the state-of-the-art Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC) to oversee the management of traffic, and citizen services including e-governance, sewerage, waste, electricity, and public bike-sharing. It will be involved in real-time surveillance of major landmarks like waterworks, parks, government hospitals, community centres, parking locations and schools. Nearly 1000 cameras have been installed around the city to maintain a record of all vehicles entering and leaving the city. Chief General Manager of Chandigarh Smart City Ltd, NP Sharma said that the use of cameras will allow e-challans to be issued for traffic violations. Besides, it will

also have adaptive traffic control systems to manage the timing of traffic lights as per vehicle flow.

From <https://egov.eletsonline.com> 04/27/2022

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## **NTPC Signs MoU with Energy Vault for Gravity-based Energy Storage Technology**

NTPC Limited inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Energy Vault Holdings for deployment of gravity-based energy storage technology and software solutions. “The MoU will formalise a long-term strategic partnership for deployment of Energy Vault’s EVx™ gravity-based energy storage technology and software solutions based on the outcome of a joint feasibility study,” said the Ministry of Power. Gurdeep Singh, Chairman and Managing Director, NTPC, said, “NTPC is emphasising on diverse clean energy portfolio to decarbonise India’s economy. With focus on renewable capacity addition, we are targeting on Solar, Wind, RTC and Hybrid projects.” The collaboration will help to achieve energy transition goals through a sustainable approach by way of utilising coal ash for manufacturing of composite blocks. Robert Piconi, Chairman, Co-Founder and CEO, Energy Vault, said, “Our mission is to make sustainable, carbon free energy a reality.” NTPC Renewable Energy (NTPC REL) has also invited online bids for selection of electrolyser technology providers.

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## **SRI LANKA: SLIBTEC, USAID to Establish First ‘Biotechnology Innovation Park’**

The Sri Lanka Institute of Biotechnology (SLIBTEC) will collaborate with the U. S. Government’s development arm, the U. S. Agency for International Development (USAID), to promote innovation in the biotechnology sector by establishing Sri Lanka’s first Biotechnology Innovation Park. The SLIBTEC Biotechnology Innovation Park will be a 13.2-acre facility in Pitipana, Homagama that will house high-end biotechnology innovation and manufacturing firms. An on-site research facility will provide a centralized multidisciplinary research and service facility, with initial areas of research in Biopharma, Biofuel, Agro Biotech, and other emerging fields. The park will become a center point of innovation in biotechnology in Sri Lanka and will attract investments and partnerships from local and international firms. By unleashing change through bio- innovation, SLIBTEC expects to increase Sri Lanka’s hi-tech exports by at least 1%. Following the signing of a Letter of Cooperation with USAID’s PARTNER project, Secretary to the Treasury and Chairman of SLIBTEC Mr. S. R. Attygalle stated that “SLIBTEC Park and SLIBTEC Research Facility will open doors in Sri Lanka and internationally for multidisciplinary research and hi-end biotech development. This will facilitate and promote innovation in all spheres of

biotechnology, including medical, agricultural, and industrial sectors. This will also usher in a new era for sustainability, as well as facilitate the creation of a more technologically advanced nation.” To support the development of the park, the Ministry of Finance worked closely with USAID to secure technical expertise through USAID’s PARTNER project for the next two years.

SLIBTEC will use this support to develop the operational framework that will help it to develop a modern business model based on international best practices. PARTNER will also provide support in areas such as the park design, research management policy, and training opportunities. “As one of Sri Lanka’s longstanding development partners, USAID has provided development and humanitarian assistance to Sri Lanka for more than six decades, making substantial investments in almost every sector. Today, we are proud to extend our support to ensure the country’s potential in biotechnology is pursued, promoted, and developed,” said Reed Aeschliman, USAID Mission Director for Sri Lanka and Maldives. “The socio-economic impact of this investment to Sri Lanka will be significant as it creates jobs, increases innovation, and promotes entrepreneurship.” SLIBTEC Pvt Ltd was incorporated in October 2020 as a government-owned entity ([www.slibtec.gov.lk](http://www.slibtec.gov.lk)). The Treasury is the sole shareholder and the Secretary to the Treasury is the SLIBTEC Chairman. USAID’s PARTNER project is a \$19 million, five-year initiative to facilitate trade and strengthen government efficiency to fuel broad-based economic growth in support of the Government of Sri Lanka’s vision for economic development and improved international trade. This project is one component of the longstanding partnership between the American and Sri Lankan people to support self-reliance and promote a healthy, educated, and employed population. To find out more about USAID’s work, please see [usaid.gov/sri-lanka](http://usaid.gov/sri-lanka).

From <https://www.lankabusinessonline.com> 04/01/2022

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## Central-West Asia

### **AZERBAIJAN: Expanding Application of High Technologies and Innovations in Audit System**

Chamber of Auditors of Azerbaijan plans to purchase audit software in 2022, that can be used by small and medium-sized audit organizations and independent auditors, Chairman of Azerbaijan’s Chamber of Auditors Vahid Novruzov told Trend. According to him, it is also planned to increase the number of measures against money laundering and the financing of terrorism. "It is also planned to create a methodological base for control in a market economy in 2022, prepare relevant proposals and expand the use of high technologies and innovations in the audit system," Novruzov noted. It is planned to hold a conference on the topic "Reporting and transparency in the digital economy" together with the Ministry of Digital

Development and Ministry of Transport of Azerbaijan and with the participation of foreign experts in September 2022, he added.

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## **KYRGYZSTAN: Canceling PCR Test and COVID-19 Certificate at Border Crossings**

Kyrgyzstan is canceling the mandatory requirement for negative PCR tests or COVID-19 vaccination certificates at border crossings from May 1, Trend reports with the reference to the Press Service of the Cabinet of Ministers of Kyrgyzstan. During the meeting of operational headquarters, the Ministry of Health of Kyrgyzstan, together with interested state bodies decided to remove the requirement for negative PCR tests or COVID-19 certificates of vaccination for citizens of Kyrgyzstan and foreigners crossing the state border through checkpoints in all modes of transport from May 1, 2022. Further, Kyrgyzstan will continue its campaign to vaccinate the population against coronavirus infection, focusing on vulnerable groups of the population, the press service of the Cabinet of Ministers reported.

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## **TURKMENISTAN: Opens Factory for Production of Carbon Black**

BAKU, Azerbaijan, April 25. The opening of a factory for the production of carbon black took place in the Mary region of Turkmenistan, Trend reports via Business Turkmenistan news agency. The construction project of this plant was implemented by the commercial organization "Eziz dag". The enterprise occupies a total area of 9.9 hectares and has modern equipment from the US and Germany. Its structure includes an office building, warehouse, as well as engineering and technical facilities. Furthermore, the annual production capacity of the plant is 3,000 tons of products per year. Carbon black is a product obtained from hydrocarbons. The range of its application is very diverse. So it is added to almost all polymers to increase their resistance to atmospheric influences, including to protect against the effects of ultraviolet radiation. With the increasing dynamics of the construction of industrial and social facilities in Turkmenistan, the industry is becoming one of the major sectors of the economy, which is given an important role in the implementation of import substitution programs and increasing the export potential of the state.

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## **UZBEKISTAN: To Develop New Program to Expand Use of Renewable Energy Sources**

Uzbekistan will develop a new program to expand and support the use of renewable energy sources (RES), the spokeswoman of the Uzbek Ministry of Energy Elmira Bekmurodova told Trend. According to her, by 2026 it is planned to increase the share of renewable energy sources in the total energy balance of Uzbekistan to 25 percent, which will save about three billion cubic meters of natural gas per year. The spokeswoman noted that by 2026, the total installed capacity of solar and wind power plants in Uzbekistan will reach 8,000 megawatts. "In accordance with the program to expand and support the use of RES, eight wind power plants with a total installed capacity of 4,000 megawatts will be built in Uzbekistan", Bekmurodova said. She said that four such power plants will be built in 2023-2024 in the country's Republic of Karakalpakstan, Bukhara and Navoi regions, and their total installed capacity will be 1,600 megawatts. "In 2025-2026, four wind farms with a total installed capacity of 2,400 megawatts will be put into operation in Uzbekistan", the spokeswoman said. Bekmurodova also said that solar power plants with a total installed capacity of 1,100 megawatts will be put into operation in the Navoi, Jizzakh, Samarkand, and Surkhandarya regions of Uzbekistan in 2023. According to her, five solar power plants with a total installed capacity of 900 megawatts are planned to be commissioned in 2024 in Bukhara, Namangan, Khorezm, Kashkadarya and Fergana regions. "In 2025-2026, solar photovoltaic power plants with a total installed capacity of 1,800 megawatts will be put into operation in Uzbekistan. By 2030, the total generation of small renewable energy sources with an installed capacity of up to 1 megawatt will be increased to 1,000 megawatts," Bekmurodova said. The spokeswoman added that the management system for the use of renewable energy will also be improved in Uzbekistan.

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## **Uzbekistan Plans to Put into Operation New Wind Power Plant**

BAKU, Azerbaijan, April 8. Uzbekistan plans to put into operation new wind power plant in the Republic of Karakalpakstan in 2024, Trend reports via Uzbek Ministry of Energy. Once launched, the power plant will generate 350 million kilowatt-hours of electricity per year, which will provide electricity to more than 120,000 households. After the plant will be commissioned, it will save 106 million cubic meters of natural gas per year and prevent the emission of 160,000 tons of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. During the construction of the new wind power plant, 400 people will be involved, and when the plant is put into operation, 30 new jobs will be created. On March 18, 2022, the decree of the president of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On measures to implement the project for construction and operation of a wind power plant with a capacity of 100 MW in the Karauzyak district of the Republic of Karakalpakstan based on the conditions of public-private partnership" was adopted. As a result of an international tender held with the support of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Saudi ACWA Power company was declared the winner with a tariff offer of 2.5695 cents per 1 kilowatt-hour of electricity. Within the

framework of the project, the investor will build and put into operation overhead power lines, a step-up substation and switching points for connecting the wind power plant to a single energy system, with their subsequent transfer to National Electric Grids of Uzbekistan JSC. The project cost is \$107.8 million and is 100 percent funded by the investor (ACWA Power).

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## Oceania

### **NEW ZEALAND: Milestone Reached with Graduation of 3,000th Police Recruit**

Police Minister Poto Williams celebrated today the graduation of Wing 352 at the Royal New Zealand Police College, which marks the 3,000th new police officer since October 2017. “The 79 recruits graduating from Wing 352 bring the total new officers since we took office to 3,000. The milestone reached today is a testament to our Government’s record investment in Police,” Poto Williams said. “Our Government has never been more active in the crackdown on gangs and organised crime. We’re addressing this issue through funding the largest police service on record, and are on track to reach a net gain of 1800 police officers on the beat since we took office by June 2023. With this graduating Wing, we are now only 389 officers away from meeting this target. “To ensure that the Police can continue their essential work and high-impact investigations, such as Operation Tauwhiro, we will keep supporting them through funding and legislation, so that they have the tools to keep our communities safe.

“Even with the challenges of COVID-19, we have seen 1,200 recruits graduate in the past 28 months. The recruits have shown impressive resilience throughout their training, and I congratulate all of them on their achievement. “I’m also happy to see that diversity amongst frontline Police staff is increasing at record levels. We are seeing more and more women, Māori and Pacific graduates from Police College. Since 2017, nearly four out of every ten graduates from have been women, with Māori, Pacific and Asian recruits making up 37% of all new Police. “It’s important we continue to increase the diversity of our frontline Police so that they better represent the communities in which they serve. The new constables will start work on the frontline in their districts from 11 April,” Poto Williams said.

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### **Government Delivering Improvements to Children’s Lives**

The Government has released its first statutory Annual Report for the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy and its third Child Poverty Related Indicators Report, which

highlight the good progress made to lift children from poverty and the work still to do. “Making New Zealand the best place in the world to be a child is a key priority for the Government, and despite a global pandemic, our plan and extra measures to support families have lifted tens of thousands of children from poverty and improved the lives of many others,” Prime Minister and Child Poverty Reduction Minister Jacinda Ardern said. “There’s no silver bullet to fix the long-term disadvantages faced by many, but the range of measures contained in our plan are making a difference.

“Our Families Package and other measures like lifting the minimum wage and benefits, expanding free lunches in schools, making doctors’ visits free till the age of 14, and expanding primary mental health services are making a difference and there is clear evidence they are improving the lives of many children. “The reports show the majority of children and young people continue to do well across most wellbeing measures, including fewer families running out of food and a 10 per cent reduction in youth offending. “However we also see the effects of COVID-19, with more children reporting instances of psychological distress than before the pandemic. “To address this, we’ve supported more children to access support through the expansion of the Mana Ake child mental wellbeing programme to five extra District Health Board areas, boosted funding to Youthline by \$1 million, put more counsellors into 164 schools, and have delivered 350,000 free counselling sessions through our Access and Choice programme.

“We know we have more to do with disparities persisting for Māori, Pacific, rainbow and disabled children and young people. “One of the things I’m particularly proud of is that despite COVID-19, we have lifted tens of thousands of children from poverty and are seeing downward trends across all nine measures of child poverty. “Our plan to make New Zealand the best place in the world to be a child is making a difference to the lives of whole families, and we will remain focused on this priority throughout our COVID-19 economic rebuild,” Jacinda Ardern said.

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## **Nurses’ Pay Equity Settlement**

The Nurses Organisation and the Public Service Association have been working with district health boards on this process since 2018. In December they reached a settlement. It is the most significant pay-equity settlement in history, and if accepted by the 40,000 nurses and other healthcare workers covered by the agreement will lift their pay by a considerable margin. The unions and the health boards agreed that it would be put to nurses to vote on next week. Last night, I was notified that the Nurses Organisation would not now do this. Obviously I am concerned about this. There is a binding agreement in place between the parties and it should be honoured. Nurses, like many other female-dominated parts of the work force, have been underpaid for decades.



This Government is committed to addressing this injustice and is the first prepared to put a significant amount of money into doing so. The process has been long and difficult, and in August I intervened to tell the Ministry of Health and district health boards to progress the claim with urgency. Collectively, this pay equity settlement will add more than \$520 million to the health payroll. Cabinet has released the money and we are ready to pay nurses properly for the work they do. But government funding has limits. There are many other demands on the health budget and on the whole of the Government's budget. We must manage many demands while keeping a lid on debt. We can't undo decades of under-payment, but what we can do is make sure nurses are paid fairly from now on. As the Minister of Health, I am not involved in the process of negotiating this agreement. But I am responsible for the state of health system, and for the critical job it does for New Zealanders. I therefore urge all parties to this settlement to act in good faith, to honour the commitments they have made and to resolve this situation as quickly as possible.

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## **Greens Join Pacific Leaders to Call for an End to Deep Sea Mining**

Greens Oceans & Fisheries (Pacific) spokesperson Teanau Tuiono has joined together with other Pacific Parliamentarians to launch The Pacific Parliamentarians' Alliance on Deep Sea Mining. The Alliance is a collective of Pacific leaders and advocates who are committed to protect the ocean from mining by large corporations backed by powerful governments. "The ocean is the foundation of shared Pasifika cultural and historical identities – it links communities here to our island homelands," says Teanau Tuiono, Green Party spokesperson for Oceans & Fisheries (Pacific). "Today, I joined with my fellow Parliamentarians from across Te Moana-Nui-A-Kiwa, as Indigenous custodians of the vast ocean, to call for a moratorium on deep sea mining in line with the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

"The life of our ocean is essential for life on earth for all living things and beings. But we face yet another human endeavour, threatening that health – the reckless pursuit of deep sea mining in our Pacific Ocean. "We must acknowledge the unprecedented threats and damage from people – overfishing, pollution, plastics, nuclear waste, biodiversity loss, ocean warming and acidification from climate impacts, and rising sea levels. "This exploitation holds much responsibility for the realities of many Pacific Islands societies today; realities that serve to shrink our options and entice our countries to repeat unsustainable patterns of economic development," he said. Teanau was supported by the Green Party's Oceans and Fisheries spokesperson Eugenie Sage who said:

"The New Zealand Government is negotiating in the International Seabed Authority



(ISA) for a regulatory regime which would allow deepsea mining to start from next July, after Nauru triggered a fast-track process to develop the regulations. “The Minister’s responses to questions in Parliament yesterday were a welcome signal that the Government may not support mining applications without a robust regulatory regime. “The importance of protecting the oceans from harm means a moratorium on mining applications would be a more precautionary approach. We need a major overhaul of the way the ISA operates for any regulatory regime to be effective,” she said. “The oceans cannot wait any longer, and we cannot ignore this crisis any longer. We are obliged to preserve the ocean for the sake of future generations and for all living and non-living things. “The protection of the ocean is our moral responsibility.”

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## **Government Takes Action to Future Proof Supply Chain**

A more resilient, productive and lower carbon freight and supply chain sector that will play a pivotal role in growing the economy, and future proof it from further international shocks, is now a step closer, Transport Minister Michael Wood announced today. The Minister has launched Te rautaki ueā me te rautaki whakawhiwhinga o Aotearoa – New Zealand freight & supply chain issues paper, the first step in developing a strategy that will optimise the supply chain over the next 30 years. “Through COVID we saw how major international disruptions to supply chains can disrupt kiwi businesses, limit the availability of key goods and services and increase the price of everyday goods and services. We are taking action to future proof our supply chain, limiting the impact of the next global shock on our businesses across the country.

“The strategy will help tackle the underlying challenges of our freight and supply chains, future proofing the system against climate change, international shocks, population growth and urbanisation, technological advancements, and shifts in international geopolitics and trading patterns,” Michael Wood said. “COVID-19 has also shone a light on supply chain vulnerabilities across the globe and domestically. I commend how quickly the sector, including businesses and government agencies, came together to develop innovative solutions to help alleviate some of the immediate pressures. This strategy takes a longer-term view. “The supply chain’s performance affects every New Zealander. The movement of goods to, from and around our country is essential for our society and economy to function and flourish and impacts our quality of life.

“The supply chain system is very complex, and we need industry and government working together, so we have a high performing freight sector and supply chain into the future. “The issues paper presents outlines the main issues and opportunities in the coming decades and is based on discussions the Government has had with more than 100 stakeholders from across the supply chain system. Anyone can make a

submission through Te Manatū Waka Ministry of Transport's consultation process which is open until 3 June 2022.

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## Taking Action on Biodiversity Challenges

The Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2020 – Te Mana o te Taiao – now has an accompanying implementation plan, aimed at driving collective action to tackle New Zealand's biodiversity crisis. "It is the first time key conservation activities across all government departments and regional councils have been identified in a plan of action to protect our native plants and wildlife," Conservation Minister Kiri Allan said. "The plan's immediate focus is on stimulating and sustaining nationwide action to achieve outcomes over the next 30 years. But it also prioritises specific goals set down in the strategy to be completed by 2025. "The implementation plan signals greater coordination of conservation effort to achieve the goals of the biodiversity strategy – ecosystems and indigenous species thrive, people are enriched through their connection with nature, prosperity and a thriving biodiversity are linked, and Māori are exercising their role as rangatira and kaitiaki.

"With 4000 of our species threatened or at risk of extinction and increasing pressure from invasive pests, land and sea use, and climate change, we need to put our words into action," Kiri Allan said. "We've already reached a few 'getting the system right' milestones. We now have an Oceans Secretariat to support the government's commitment to a more holistic, integrated approach to managing our oceans. Māori are being supported through Jobs for Nature to partner or lead biodiversity restoration projects that meet their aspirations. "The next cab off the rank will be establishing an oversight group to advise on governance structures to achieve Te Mana o te Taiao. "As Conservation Minister this is one of my top priorities. The implementation plan provides guidance on where to concentrate our efforts to bring about transformational change, including leadership and accountability for outcomes, monitoring and reporting, empowering community action, and protecting and restoring nature.

"It also puts biodiversity protection at the heart of economic activity, including making sure tourism activities are sustainable and visitor impacts reduced at popular destinations. This can be achieved through the government's tourism strategy, the Milford Opportunities Project, and working with regional councils to make biodiversity protection more economically attractive for landowners. It also integrates with other programmes across government, such as the One Billion Trees programme, Predator Free 2050 and Jobs for Nature. "Over the next five years, people can expect to see a more coordinated and collaborative approach to biodiversity work from central and local government to achieve much-needed gains for nature," Kiri Allan said. Protecting our environment and biodiversity through working to achieve

the outcomes of Te Mana o te Taiao, the Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2020 is an agreed area of co-operation between the Labour Government and the Green Party.

Associate Minister for the Environment (Biodiversity) and Minister of Climate Change, James Shaw said the Government's commitment to protect and improve nature will also help meet its climate change targets. "Tackling the biodiversity crisis goes hand-in-hand with tackling the climate crisis. But for decades, successive Governments have approached these issues separately. "We are changing that to better harness the power of nature to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and also help us adapt to the impacts of climate change. "The Biodiversity Strategy and its implementation will go a long way towards achieving this goal. "The Emissions Reduction Plan the Government publishes next month will also need to encourage nature-based solutions that can both protect our precious natural taonga and tackle climate change," James Shaw said. The implementation plan will be updated regularly to include actions in light of new information including any emerging threats or events. A five-yearly review of the implementation plan will evaluate progress.

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## **New Technology for E-Waste Switched on**

A new state-of-the-art machine that sorts and shreds electronic waste has officially started operation in Auckland today. Environment Minister David Parker pressed start on Computer Recycling Ltd's new BLUBOX machine, which was supported by a \$1.5 million grant from the Waste Minimisation Fund. "The BLUBOX machine is a step forward for New Zealand in its transition toward a circular economy," David Parker said. "We estimate our e-waste recycling rate at less than two per cent. This is well behind other countries, and we need to catch up with those showing the way." Because e-waste contains valuable materials such as gold, silver, copper, platinum, palladium and brass as well as hazardous toxins, including mercury, being able to safely and efficiently recover and recycle e-waste has economic, as well as human and environmental health, benefits. BLUBOX shreds and optically sorts hard to recycle electronic waste in an enclosed negative pressure system, which can recover up to 90 per cent of e-waste components.

Hard to recycle electronic waste includes flat panel displays, laptops, televisions, mobile phones and light bulbs. The majority of e-waste is lamps and flat screen items. This technology will expand Computer Recycling's e-waste processing capacity from an average of 1,300 tonnes per year to 2,000 tonnes each year. As more e-waste becomes available, the processing capacity of the equipment can be lifted to 6,000 tonnes or more per year. "This initiative is a good example of the comprehensive action the Government is taking on waste," David Parker said. "In July 2020, we declared electrical and electronic products as one of six 'priority products' for

regulated product stewardship schemes under the Waste Minimisation Act. “An important part of our transition to a low-waste circular economy is improving the infrastructure needed to recycle, which is often supported by the Waste Minimisation Fund.” David Parker joined Computer Recycling Ltd for the launch at their recycling and disposal centre in Penrose, Auckland.

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## **New Government Plan Helps Support Older Workers**

Supporting older people to stay in the workforce and transition their skills as they age and their circumstances change is a key part of the new Older Workers Employment Action Plan, Minister for Social Development and Employment Carmel Sepuloni and Minister for Seniors Dr Ayesha Verrall announced today. “The Government wants every New Zealander who is able to be earning, learning, caring or volunteering to do so,” Carmel Sepuloni said. This approach contributes to a well-functioning labour market which in turn, helps us tackle the long-term challenges to lift the wellbeing of all New Zealanders,” Carmel Sepuloni said. “Older workers make up around a third of the New Zealand workforce and almost half of all New Zealanders aged 65 to 69 are employed,” Dr Ayesha Verrall said.

“But we know that older workers can face unique and complex challenges in finding and staying in paid employment. Whether that’s being made redundant and struggling to find a new job or having limited options when they do look for work. “This action plan acts as a blueprint on how the Government can help support and encourage older people to stay in the workforce if they want or need to and supports the Government’s overall Employment Strategy.” The Older Workers Employment Action Plan focuses on people aged 50 and over and is made up of 11 action items with a focus on training and upskilling, finding and staying in work, supporting employers to be more inclusive, and planning for the effects and opportunities of an aging workforce.

It supports the Government’s overall Employment Strategy, along with six other population-specific employment action plans. Dr Verrall said that plan was even more important now, as New Zealand recovers from COVID-19. “Older workers bring skills and knowledge to their workplaces and contribute significantly to the economy,” Dr Ayesha Verrall said. “Keeping these people and their skills in the workforce is key to keeping our economy strong. “We want everyone- including older people- to have a job that fulfils their needs and aspirations and contributes to their overall wellbeing,” Dr Ayesha Verrall said.

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## **Supporting Communities to Prepare for Climate Impacts**

From today New Zealanders can have their say on a proposed National Adaptation Plan to help communities across the country adapt to the unavoidable impacts of climate change. “Aotearoa will soon have a plan to bring down our emissions and help prevent the worst effects of climate change, but we must also support communities already being hit by more extreme and more frequent weather events,” Climate Change Minister James Shaw said. “Just in the last few months we have seen massive floods, such as those in Tairāwhiti; storms, such as those experienced recently in Westport; fires in the Waituna wetlands in Southland; and droughts right across the country. “These events demonstrate the case for urgent action on climate change – action to protect lives, incomes, homes, businesses and infrastructure.

“Climate effects are also known to increase existing inequalities for Māori, Pasifika, women, disabled people, youth, older people, and low-income groups.” The draft National Adaptation Plan outlines the actions the Government will take over the next six years to respond to the priority climate-related risks identified in the 2020 National Climate Change Risk Assessment. “Central Government does not bear all the costs. The consultation asks how best to share risks and costs between property and asset owners, insurers, banks and local government as well.” “It also asks for views on managed retreat and flood insurance, to ensure a joined-up approach to climate change adaptation.

“Of course, the best thing we can do to stop these extreme weather events from getting worse is cutting the pollution we put into the atmosphere in the first place. Next month’s Emissions Reduction Plan will set out how we plan to do that. However, we know that the climate is already changing and there will be some effects we cannot avoid. “I urge all New Zealanders to read the plan and make a submission. Together, we can help create resilient communities, where our homes and the places we love are protected for generations to come,” said James Shaw.

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 04/27/2022

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## **Government Puts Port Safety Under the Spotlight**

The health and safety practices at our nation’s ports will be investigated as part of a range of actions taken by the Minister for Workplace Relations and Safety in response to two deaths in the space of a week. “All New Zealanders should return from work safe and unharmed. Recently we have seen a disproportionate number of injuries and fatalities in the port industry. The actions taken today will provide clarity on how we can reduce these serious incidents,” said Michael Wood. In addition, Maritime New Zealand officers and WorkSafe inspectors will be undertaking assessments at each of the 13 major international commercial ports around the country over the next fortnight. “We are sending a strong message to the port sector, every player must ensure they are doing all they can to reduce and manage risk,”

said Michael Wood.

“The TAIC investigation will provide an independent, safety focused approach to identifying wider circumstances and causes of the accident. TAIC investigations are systemic, independent and impartial, with extensive legal powers to gather and protect evidence. “I know New Zealanders will be rightly concerned about the safety culture at our country’s ports. Today I met with port heads, unions, stevedore representatives and regulators to impress the need for an immediate shift to a safety first culture. “Our ports play a crucial role in our economy, and as part of our economic recovery it is essential that they operate efficiently and safely. I want to acknowledge that there has been good process over recent months and I thank the sector for their continued engagement. “Other sectors should also take notice from these recent events and remind themselves of their responsibilities to ensure the safety of their workplaces,” said Michael Wood.

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 04/28/2022

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## 4、 Economic and Social Development and ICT

### Asia-Pacific

#### **Cities That Plan for Age-Readiness Can Reap Lasting Social and Economic Benefits**

As the world gets older and cities expand to accommodate more people, focusing on making urban infrastructure and services ‘age-ready’ -- conducive for older persons and younger ones alike -- can have universal social and economic benefits, a new World Bank report shows. “Silver Hues: Building Age-Ready Cities” builds on the reality that for the first time in history, there are more persons aged 65 years or over than there are children under five. In fact, by 2050, one in six people will be 65 or older. At the same time, COVID-19 has wreaked havoc on older persons globally, while the world contends with the climate crisis and continued conflict and violence across the world, even as more older persons move to cities and towns to live close to younger family members or have access to essential services like healthcare or public transportation.

This makes it crucial for policymakers to proactively think about and invest intentionally in planning and designing cities for an age-ready future. The report provides a roadmap on how focusing on six key areas – universal design, housing solutions, multigenerational spaces, physical mobility, technology, and efficient spatial forms – can help policymakers design adaptive, productive, and inclusive age-ready cities. “An age-ready city is a city for all. Age-readiness is not just about older persons. It has universal benefits and is conducive to better living for everyone.

That is why we feel it is critical for countries – those that have a large aging population and those that will see aging in the coming years - to think about how their cities and towns can be planned and designed for an age-ready future,” said Sameh Wahba, Global Director for the World Bank’s Urban, Disaster Risk Management, Resilience and Land Global Practice.

Silver Hues: Building Age-Ready Cities offers key reasons for why this can be one-in-a-lifetime opportunity for countries: The age-readiness of cities can have benefits for all age groups and cater to distinct needs that are age-agnostic – for example, open spaces like parks and gardens and community amenities like libraries are not just for older persons – everyone benefits from these services. About 15 percent of the global population has disabilities but over 46 percent of persons over the age of 60 have one or more disabilities. Investing in accessible infrastructure and signage, for example, helps older persons lead dignified, empowered lives without needing constant assistance. There is some evidence that the benefits of proactively designing and maintaining accessible infrastructure outweigh the costs, especially for cities whose financial resources are scarce. Age-readiness is also smart economics – older persons represent a large, attractive market for goods, services and investments, so building healthcare, technology and leisure solutions that work not just for older persons, but for everyone regardless of age, disability, gender, and income, will benefit the community at large. There are immeasurable social and cultural benefits for cities to be age-ready. Older persons pass on invaluable social and cultural knowledge, behaviors, and emotional and psychological counsel to younger generations, in addition to how often they pass on their financial savings. Making cities work for older persons as well as they do for younger age groups helps countries nurture strong constituencies and underscore their commitment to inclusion in its truest sense and caring for diverse population groups.

The report suggests that cities can reach their goal to be age-ready by building a long-term vision, investing in data and analysis, consulting with a diverse group of stakeholders on proposed measures, designing practical and lasting measures while articulating the role of the public and private sectors, of communities, academia, civil society, and external institutions, instating ways to implement policy actions and evaluating these actions for their effectiveness. Aging is a predictable reality – so planning for it and ensuring that urban infrastructure and services work across age groups is not just inclusive but is also economically and socially beneficial for cities. Walkable cities, accessible public transit options, safe, good housing and innovative technological services and solutions are not just for older people -- they provide universal benefits. The report posits that age-readiness should be an essential part of countries’ plans as they look to a post-COVID-19 future.

From <https://www.worldbank.org/> 04/05/2022

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**Virtual Roundtable Discussion by High-Level Government**



## **Representatives, Open to the Media, at 16.00-17.00 CET on 27 April 2022**

What progress are OECD countries making towards the targets adopted in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development? The answer can be found in *The Short and Winding Road to 2030: Measuring Distance to the SDG Targets*, to be released at 11.00 am on 27 April 2022. The report uses UN and OECD data to look at countries' current achievements, whether they have been moving towards or away from the targets, and how likely they are to meet their commitments by 2030. The report also considers how progress may be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Grouped under 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) the targets are clustered into five themes – People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnerships. SDGs under the 'People' theme, for instance, aim at eradicating poverty and hunger (Goals 1 and 2), at ensuring that all human beings can fulfil their potential, in particular in terms of health and education (Goals 3 and 4), and without being penalised because of their gender (Goal 5). Journalists can request an embargoed copy of the report in digital format by contacting [embargo@oecd.org](mailto:embargo@oecd.org). Embargoed copies will be sent the day before release. The findings of the report will be presented and discussed at a virtual roundtable discussion by high-level government representatives, open to the media, at 16.00-17.00 CET on 27 April 2022. For further information, journalists are invited to contact the OECD's Media Office (tel: + 33 1 4524 9700). Working with over 100 countries, the OECD is a global policy forum that promotes policies to preserve individual liberty and improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world.

From <https://www.oecd.org/> 04/20/2022

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## **OECD Countries Advancing Slowly on Sustainable Development Targets by 2030**

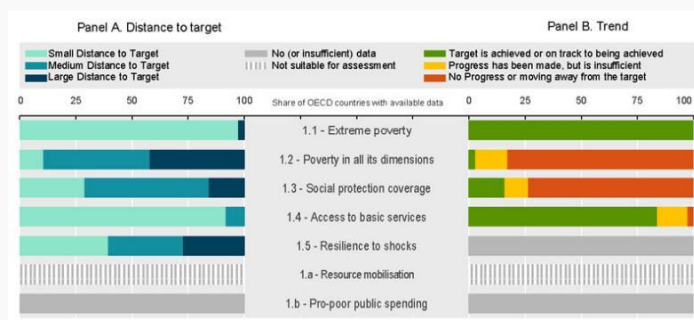
Despite progress made since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Goals (SDGs), OECD countries have met or are close to meeting only a quarter of the targets for which performance can be gauged, according to a new OECD report. Virtually all OECD countries are already securing basic economic needs and implementing the policy tools and frameworks mentioned in the 2030 Agenda. But progress towards 21 targets on issues such as ensuring no one is left behind, restoring trust in institutions and limiting pressures on the natural environment are still way off track. [The Short and Winding Road to 2030: Measuring Distance to the SDG Targets](#) says that while OECD countries have eradicated extreme poverty, most of them need to do more to reduce deprivation more broadly. Women, young adults and migrants face greater challenges than the rest of the population, and despite some progress, women's rights and opportunities are still limited in both private and public spheres. In addition, unhealthy behaviours such as malnutrition and tobacco consumption, which appear to be more common



among low socio-economic groups, and disparities in education from early years of life, tend to exacerbate inequalities.

Adopted by world leaders in 2015, the 2030 Agenda calls on all countries to build a better and more sustainable future by focussing on a number of targets grouped under the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The SDGs themselves are clustered into five broad themes – People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnerships. For instance, SDGs under the ‘People’ theme aim at eradicating poverty (Goal 1) and hunger (Goal 2), at ensuring that all human beings can fulfil their potential, in particular in terms of health (Goal 3) and education (Goal 4), and without being penalised because of their gender (Goal 5). The report uses UN and OECD data to assess the performance of OECD countries by looking at their current achievements, whether they have been moving towards or away from the targets, and how likely they are to meet their commitments by 2030. The report also considers how progress may be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The report finds that while most OECD countries are close to eradicating severe hunger, few of them will be able to fully prevent social exclusion or reduce malnutrition by 2030. On average, around one in eight OECD residents are considered as income poor, and unhealthy diets and sedentary lifestyles have led to rising obesity rates in all OECD countries – with an average of 60% of adults being overweight or obese.

**Distance to target and trends over time in OECD countries, by SDG target, Goal 1 (eradicating poverty)**



Source: All data is taken and adapted from *SDG Global Database*, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/unsdg> and *OECD.Stat*, <https://stats.oecd.org/>

The report also confirms that environmental pressures are rising. Progress was made on many fronts including energy intensity, water use and municipal waste management. While some of these positive developments are attributable to policy action and technical progress, the displacement of resource- and pollution-intensive production abroad also explains some of this progress. The use of material resources to support economic growth remains high, and many valuable materials continue to be disposed of as waste. On the climate front, despite progress achieved in decoupling greenhouse gas emissions from population and GDP growth, total emissions are hardly decreasing, and all OECD countries are continuing to support

the production and consumption of fossil fuels. As for biodiversity, despite some encouraging developments in protecting ecosystems, threats to terrestrial and marine biodiversity have been rising. Without more determined action, biodiversity loss will continue.

The report nevertheless identifies a number of other areas where the distance that still remains to meet SDG targets is negligible or small. OECD countries are able to provide everyone with access to some basic amenities, including sanitation, fresh water and energy. OECD countries have also been able to reduce maternal and infant mortality, to afford access to early childhood education, to provide modern education facilities and a legal identity to all citizens. Presenting the report today, OECD Deputy Secretary-General Jeff Schlagenhauf said: “The SDGs are our promise and our responsibility to future generations. While this report shows that some targets are far from being achieved, the momentum for international action is strong. Opportunities to advance on the agenda are many and should not be wasted given the short time left. To seize these opportunities, we need a rigorous understanding of where countries stand, how quickly they are advancing towards their goals and what should be the priorities for action.”

The 2030 Agenda is global by essence and calls on developed countries to implement fully their official development assistance commitments beyond their borders. However, total official assistance provided by the donor countries of the Development Assistance Committee remains less than half of the intended target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income. The report also aims at setting out the future statistical agenda on SDGs. Despite progress on measurement, there are still many blind spots. Although data are currently available for almost 70% of the objectives in the Planet category, for instance, only one in three of the targets can be monitored effectively due to limited availability of robust time-series. The OECD says that the recovery packages deployed by most OECD governments in response to the COVID-19 crisis provide an opportunity to quicken the pace of progress towards meeting the SDGs. The full report is available at <https://oe.cd/measuring-sdgs-2022>. For further information, journalists are invited to contact [Martine Zaïda](#) or the OECD [Media Office](#) (tel: +33 1 4524 9700). *Working with over 100 countries, the OECD is a global policy forum that promotes policies to preserve individual liberty and improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world.*

From <https://www.oecd.org/> 04/27/2022

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## **Developing Asia Economies Set to Grow 5.2% This Year amid Global Uncertainty**

Developing Asia's economies are forecast to grow 5.2% this year and 5.3% in 2023, thanks to a robust recovery in domestic demand and continued expansion in exports.

However, uncertainties stemming from the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the continuing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, and tightening by the United States Federal Reserve pose risks to the outlook. Several subregions, including South Asia and East Asia, are expected to return to the economic growth rates they experienced before the pandemic, according to the [Asian Development Outlook \(ADO\) 2022](#), released by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) today. Inflation in the region remains manageable but is forecast to rise to 3.7% this year, before moderating to 3.1% in 2023. The Russian invasion of Ukraine poses the most severe risk to developing Asia's economic outlook. The war is already affecting economies in the region through sharp increases in prices for commodities such as oil, and has heightened instability in global financial markets. COVID-19 continues to impact many parts of developing Asia, with some economies experiencing new surges in cases.

"Economies in developing Asia are starting to find their footing as they slowly emerge from the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic," said ADB Chief Economist Albert Park. "However, geopolitical uncertainty and new COVID-19 outbreaks and virus variants could derail this momentum. Governments in the region will need to remain vigilant and prepared to take steps to counter these risks. That includes making sure as many people as possible are fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Monetary authorities should also continue to monitor their inflation situation closely and not fall behind the curve." Along with the recovery in domestic demand, and looser mobility restrictions on account of vaccination progress, increasing exports fueled developing Asia's recovery last year. Remittances to the region also remained resilient, especially for economies relying heavily on these incoming money transfers, such as Bangladesh, the Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, and Tajikistan. International tourism began to pick up for economies that have started to reopen, including Maldives, Sri Lanka, and some economies in the Pacific.

Most of developing Asia will see steady growth this year and in 2023. Economies in the Caucasus and Central Asia are forecast to grow 3.6% on average this year and 4.0% next year. The trade-dependent economies of Southeast Asia are forecast to grow collectively by 4.9% this year and 5.2% in 2023. Pacific economies, which are highly dependent on tourism, are expected to grow 3.9% this year and 5.4% in 2023, following a 0.6% contraction in 2021. East Asia is expected to see economic growth of 4.7% this year and 4.5% in 2023. The People's Republic of China, the region's largest economy, is forecast to grow 5.0% this year and 4.8% next year, amid continued export strength. South Asian economies are expected to expand collectively by 7.0% in 2022 and 7.4% in 2023, with India—the subregion's largest economy—expected to grow 7.5% this fiscal year and 8.0% next fiscal year.

*ADO 2022* features a special analysis of the learning losses from school closures caused by COVID-19. It notes how these learning losses have hit girls and students from poor households disproportionately, reducing their future earnings potential by

more and thus increasing inequality. The special topic is an update to ADB's previous [study](#) on learning and earning losses in the region, released in April 2021. ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty. Established in 1966, it is owned by 68 members—49 from the region.

**GDP growth rate and inflation, % per year**

	GDP growth				Inflation			
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>Developing Asia</b>	4.7	-1.8	8.5	5.0	2.1	3.1	3.1	4.5
<b>Caucasus and Central Asia</b>	4.7	-1.8	8.5	5.0	2.1	3.1	3.1	4.5
Armenia	4.7	-1.8	8.5	5.0	2.1	3.1	3.1	4.5
Azerbaijan	4.7	-1.8	8.5	5.0	2.1	3.1	3.1	4.5
Georgia	4.7	-1.8	8.5	5.0	2.1	3.1	3.1	4.5
Kazakhstan	4.7	-1.8	8.5	5.0	2.1	3.1	3.1	4.5
Kyrgyz Republic	4.7	-1.8	8.5	5.0	2.1	3.1	3.1	4.5

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“Rising vaccination rates will help most of the economies of the Pacific recover from the effects of the pandemic by allowing the safe opening of borders and enabling a return to positive economic growth,” said ADB Director General for the Pacific Leah Gutierrez. “This suggests the Pacific has turned a corner, and that is good news. Now is not the time to be complacent about the vaccine rollout. It is critical for all countries in the subregion to reach a high vaccine coverage. At the same time, efforts to wind back heightened COVID-19 response expenditures, attention to bringing down debt levels, and careful monitoring of inflationary pressures are needed to underpin sustainable and inclusive economic recovery.”

High global fuel prices due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine are compounding inflationary pressures in the Pacific through elevated transportation costs and rising prices of imports. On average, inflation in the Pacific is projected to rise sharply to 5.9% in 2022, before easing to 4.7% in 2023. High inflation poses a risk to recovery by potentially constraining economic growth through reduced purchasing power and consumption spending. In 2021, growth in Papua New Guinea (PNG), the biggest economy in the Pacific, was dampened by two COVID-19 surges, underpinned by a very low vaccination rate. Some relief has come from strong commodity prices and fiscal stimulus sustained by ADB and other development partners. Increased mining activities in the second half of the year should contribute to growth of 3.4% in 2022. ADO 2022 says growth in PNG is expected to rise to 4.6% in 2023.

Fiji, the subregion’s second-largest economy, is projected to record 7.1% growth in 2022 and 8.5% in 2023. The opening of the country’s borders in December 2021 gives hope for a revival of tourism, which remains key to a quick economic turnaround and restored employment. However, international competition among travel destinations is likely to be intense, says the ADB report. After successfully keeping COVID-19 at bay for almost 2 years, community transmission of the virus broke out in Solomon Islands in January this year. ADO 2022 expects the Solomon Islands economy to contract by 3% in 2022 because of restrictions on mobility and domestic transportation, and associated health impacts of the pandemic. While logging activities are expected to decline in 2023, the expected easing of COVID-19 restrictions will increase construction, fishing, and mining, leading to an economic recovery of 3%. Vanuatu’s economic growth is forecast at 1% in 2022, with growth in public services as well as a recovery in agriculture and construction offset by the domestic transmission of COVID-19, which has delayed the reopening of international borders. Growth is projected to rise to 4% in 2023 as tourism activity revives.

The South Pacific economies of the Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa, and Tonga were, until recently, largely spared the health impacts from community transmission of COVID-19, which allowed time for near-universal vaccine coverage. The report projects growth in the Cook Islands to be 9.1% in 2022 and 11.2% in 2023, supported by a vaccination rate of more than 96% of the eligible population and the acceleration

of infrastructure projects to enhance readiness to receive tourists. The economic recovery in Niue will similarly depend on safely easing restrictions and reopening to tourists in the coming months. With no clear sign of borders reopening in Samoa, growth in 2022 is expected to be tepid at 0.4%. Constrained by scarring in the tourism sector, only a slight increase in growth to 2.2% is projected for 2023. The biggest risk to the economic outlook would be any escalation in the community transmission of COVID-19 and a consequent delay in restoring tourism. The delayed reopening of borders in Tonga due to the recent volcanic eruption and community transmission of COVID-19 are likely to slow long-term tourism recovery. ADO 2022 projects an economic contraction of 1.2% for 2022 and a return to positive growth of 2.9% in 2023 assuming borders reopen.

The North Pacific economies contracted in 2021, as travel and mobility restrictions continued to stifle tourism in Palau and trade in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and the Marshall Islands. In the FSM and the Marshall Islands, border reopenings are expected to boost recovery, but this rests on further progress with vaccinations. Economic expansion of 2.2% is expected in the FSM in 2022, accelerating to 4.2% in 2023, while the Marshall Islands economy is projected to return to growth of 1.2% in 2022, picking up to 2.2% in 2023. Growth in the tourism-driven economy of Palau is expected to reach 9.4% in 2022 before accelerating to 18.3% in 2023, provided the effects of the pandemic dissipate, allowing for a gradual return to pre-pandemic levels of international arrivals. The report projects a pickup in growth in the Central Pacific economies of Kiribati and Tuvalu and slower growth in Nauru in 2022. Surging global oil prices will significantly affect inflation in these import-dependent economies. Growth of 1.8% is expected in Kiribati in 2022, picking up to 2.3% in 2023. Nauru's economic growth will slow to 1% in 2022 and rise to 2.4% in 2023. Tuvalu will experience 3% growth in 2022 and again in 2023.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 04/06/2022

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## **Reopened Borders, Domestic Resource Mobilization to Lead Economic Recovery in the North Pacific**

Border reopenings are expected to lead an economic recovery in the North Pacific, although this is contingent on further vaccination progress, according to a new report by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) released today. The Asian Development Outlook (ADO) 2022, ADB's flagship economic report, says economic growth of 2.2% is expected in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) in 2022, accelerating to 4.2% in 2023. The Marshall Islands economy is projected to return to growth of 1.2% in 2022, picking up to 2.2% in 2023. The tourism-driven economy of Palau is expected to achieve growth of 9.4% in 2022 and 18.3% in 2023, provided that effects of the pandemic dissipate, allowing for a gradual return to pre-pandemic levels of international arrivals. The positive growth forecasts for 2022 follow 2 years of

economic contraction after the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic severely limited travel, tourism, and mobility in the North Pacific. “Strict border controls and public health measures have effectively contained COVID-19 in the North Pacific, but they have strained the economy,” said ADB Senior Country Officer Maybelline Bing. “During the recovery phase, it is vital for these countries to spearhead critical policy measures to deal with the fiscal pressures exerted by the pandemic.”

Those policy measures include tax reform and improved domestic resource mobilization to help offset the narrow economic bases of these countries, which heighten their sensitivity to shocks, says the report. ADB’s economic outlook for the FSM and the Marshall Islands assumes that travel restrictions will persist until mid-2022, after which economic activity will begin to normalize. Accordingly, hospitality and transport industries are expected to return to growth, and construction will benefit as availability of building materials and mobility of skilled workers increase. In Palau, tourist arrivals are projected to recover to about 25,000 in 2022, subject to downside risks from uncertainties globally. A full economic recovery to pre-pandemic levels in the North Pacific is not expected until 2023.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 04/06/2022

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## **ADB, ILX Partner to Boost Climate and Other SDG Investments in Asia and Pacific**

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and fund manager ILX Management (ILX) signed cooperation arrangements that will help scale up private sector investments to address climate change and other development challenges in developing countries as they target achieving the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The two parties will cooperate in identifying projects under ADB’s private sector operations that qualify for cofinancing. ILX Fund I, a private credit fund managed by ILX, will help mobilize cofinancing for projects across ADB’s developing member countries (DMCs). ILX will invest on behalf of Dutch pension provider APG Asset Management. “We are thrilled to partner with ILX to mobilize financial resources that will help developing countries to meet their SDGs,” said ADB Director General for Private Sector Operations Suzanne Gaboury. “Expanding partnerships with institutional investors like ILX and ADB’s strong track record of investing for development impact will make a meaningful contribution particularly to climate action in our region.”

“The partnership demonstrates our shared commitment to fostering sustainable and inclusive growth in Asia and the Pacific,” said ILX Chief Investment Officer Elvira Eurlings. “We look forward to working with ADB, and with other institutional investors as they play an increasingly important role in providing finance to help countries in emerging markets meet climate and other development goals.” In 2021, ADB elevated its ambition to provide \$100 billion in cumulative climate finance to its DMCs

from 2019 to 2030. It has committed to ensure that at least 75% of ADB projects address climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts by 2030. Based in Amsterdam, ILX creates large-scale investment opportunities in global development finance that directly contribute to sustainable development across emerging markets. ILX Fund I invests in private sector loans arranged by multilateral development banks and development finance institutions. Launched with a \$750 million commitment from APG Asset Management, ILX Fund I targets a total fund size of \$1 billion.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 04/21/2022

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## **Deepening Economic Integration and Equipping Business for Dynamic, Inclusive and Sustainable Growth Are Key to Economic Recovery, Say Business Leaders**

Asia-Pacific business leaders in the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC), meeting this week in Vancouver, affirmed their determination to continue to work closely together to respond to the challenge of sustaining the region's growth trajectory in the face of an increasingly complex, interconnected and rapidly changing global environment. ABAC Chair for 2022, Supant Mongkolsuthree, said that a series of grave challenges arising from the lingering effects of the pandemic and recent events that have caused disruptions to the global markets and supply chain—triggering inflationary pressures and threatening food security - have affected the Asia-Pacific region's ability to achieve sustainable, inclusive and resilient growth. "Responding to these challenges demands decisive, deliberate action, both to deepen the economic integration of our region and to better equip our businesses, including the smallest, to achieve dynamic and sustainable growth," he said. "We will take the opportunity to convey our views on how this can be achieved to APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade who will be meeting next month."

To deepen economic integration, ABAC has consistently advocated the eventual realization of a Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP). "We welcomed APEC's initiative for a renewed dialogue on FTAAP," the Chair said. "We will be proposing to ministers that APEC launch five multi-year joint work programs to develop tangible outcomes on identified business priorities including digitalization, inclusion, sustainability, trade and investment and trade response to the pandemic." "We also want to see a stronger, more relevant World Trade Organization (WTO) and we will call on APEC Ministers to work together to shape a 12th Ministerial Conference outcome that enables a strong, credible and relevant WTO, that provides a secure foundation for the rules-based multilateral trading system, responds effectively to the pandemic, fosters a robust return to growth, and reflects evolving business needs and models." "ABAC's priorities have been and will continue to be focused on creating a more level playing field for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) who have been badly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic," he added.

“It is also critical that MSMEs develop a long-term approach to embracing digitalization to enhance resilience and promote innovation and agility in the face of uncertain market demands and business environments.” The Chair also said that ABAC supports the global agenda of sustainability, emphasizing “we must build a Net Zero Economy and promote green recovery pathways, including developing innovative tools for the transition to a low-carbon economy, drawing on our Climate Leadership Principles. We should also foster a sustainable food system that ensures food security and safety through the use of technologies and by reducing market distortions.” A cybersecurity symposium held on the margins of the meeting provided insights on how to make APEC a cybersecurity leader while closing the cybersecurity skills gap. It looked at establishing platforms and opportunities for cooperation on cybersecurity across the region. The Chair thanked ABAC Canada for hosting the meeting which demonstrates ABAC’s determination to enable the resumption of business and cross-border travel and in learning to live with COVID-19 judging by the large number of on-site attendees of ABAC members. The Honorable Ravi Kahlon, Minister of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation of British Columbia delivered the keynote address during the opening session of the meeting.

From <https://www.apec.org/> 04/29/2022

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## East Asia

### **CHINA: PRC Economic Growth to Slow to 5% This Year**

Economic growth in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) will slow this year and in 2023, after recovering in 2021, as domestic demand remains lackluster despite continued export strength and increased fiscal support, according to a new report by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The PRC’s economy is forecast to grow 5.0% in 2022 and 4.8% in 2023, as the labor force shrinks and return to investment declines, according to the Asian Development Outlook (ADO) 2022 released today. The outlook for 2022 compares with ADB’s previous forecast of 5.3% growth, issued in December 2021. “Economic growth is expected to remain moderate in early 2022 before picking up slightly in the middle of the year,” said ADB Country Director for the PRC Yolanda Fernandez Lommen. “Reforming fiscal relations between the central government and local governments is key to narrowing the local government fiscal gap and equalizing the delivery of basic public services across regions.”

Following modest food price deflation last year, inflation is projected to pick up in line with higher nonfood prices, before easing marginally in 2023. Consumer price inflation is forecast at 2.3% this year, notably higher than the 0.9% inflation rate in 2021. With commodity price pressures unlikely to subside in 2022, and global energy prices forecast to rise sharply, producer price inflation is expected to stay elevated—which may force producers to pass on higher input prices. Domestic

demand is expected to improve gradually this year. The persistence of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) infections continues to weigh on consumer confidence and dampen growth in household demand. Investment looks set to improve in 2022. Real estate investment will likely pick up, with borrowing curbs on the sector sustained but adjusted to facilitate market stabilization and gradual recovery. Risks to the outlook are both domestic and external. Domestic risks include the unpredictability of COVID-19 outbreaks and virus mutations, which could endanger the recovery in domestic consumer demand. Mounting credit risk in the financial system, especially at smaller banks, could trigger a need for policy responses that may induce temporary tensions in the financial market. External risks include economic spillover effects from the Russian invasion of Ukraine and frictions in global value chains caused by temporary supply shortages or transport bottlenecks.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 04/06/2022

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## **Chinese Premier Calls for Stabilization of Employment, Prices to Shore Up Economy**

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang on Monday called for the stabilization of employment and price levels to keep the country's economy running within an appropriate range. Li, also a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, made the remarks while presiding over a symposium on the economic situation in east China's Jiangxi Province, which government officials from Jiangxi, Liaoning, Zhejiang, Guangdong and Sichuan provinces attended online or offline. While highlighting the strong resilience of the Chinese economy, Li urged people to remain vigilant in the face of unexpected changes and mounting downward pressures both domestically and externally, and face up to new challenges. The premier underscored the need to use this time to implement decisions and measures laid out during the Central Economic Work Conference in 2021 and in this year's government work report.

Supportive policies such as tax refunds and cuts, financial support for the real economy, the issuance of special government bonds, and the construction of key projects should be accelerated to help market entities tide over difficulties, he said. He urged solid efforts to boost spring farming, strive for a bumper grain harvest for the whole year, and consolidate the foundations of stable prices. Efforts should be made to ensure stable supplies of electricity, coal and other energies, and maintain the orderly operations of key transport networks and ports so as to maintain the stability of industrial and supply chains, Li said. The premier said that targeted supportive measures should be unveiled for sectors and firms facing difficulties -- particularly medium, small and micro-sized enterprises, and individually owned businesses. Li also stressed the importance of ensuring the supply of daily necessities for people affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the need to work to meet the people's medical treatment needs.

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## **Chinese Premier Stresses Need to Stabilize Macroeconomy, Ensure People's Livelihoods**

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang has called for the accelerated implementation of established policies and measures, the stabilization of China's macroeconomy, the maintenance of the country's economy within an appropriate range, and work to ensure people's livelihoods. Li, also a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, made the remarks during an inspection tour of east China's Jiangxi Province on Monday and Tuesday. Inspecting a water conservancy project construction site, Li learned about the household water supply, irrigation and water transport functions it will have after its completion. The issuance and usage of special local government bonds should be accelerated, Li said, also calling for increased credit support and accelerated project approval in a bid to expand effective investment and create more jobs, especially for migrant workers.

At an entrepreneurship park for cross-border e-commerce in Nanchang, capital of Jiangxi Province, Li urged the introduction of financial support measures to relieve cash strains faced by enterprises. Reform should be deepened to invigorate market vitality and social creativity, and efforts should be made to promote mass entrepreneurship and innovation, and spawn new business models, he said. While visiting a rice farm, Li said that efforts should be stepped up to ensure the abundant provision and stable prices of agricultural supplies. At a company that produces new energy vehicles, Li called for efforts to accelerate tax rebates and ensure smooth domestic and international logistics to stabilize industrial and supply chains. Acknowledging Jiangxi's social and economic development achievements, Li urged the province to better coordinate COVID-19 control and economic development.

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## **China to Promote Steady Growth in Consumption and Foreign Trade, and Stabilize Economic Fundamentals**

China will adopt policy measures to boost consumption, as part of efforts to keep economic fundamentals stable and ensure and improve people's lives, according to a decision made at the State Council's Executive Meeting chaired by Premier Li Keqiang on Wednesday. The meeting also decided on greater policy support such as export rebates to promote steady growth of foreign trade. "Consumption is a steady driver of economic growth and bears on ensuring and improving people's livelihood." Li said. "It is vital to take a coordinated approach with both near- and long-term



needs in mind, to keep consumption stable for now and unlock potential with holistic measures." The meeting decided on measures to counter the impact of COVID-19 and boost the recovery and growth of consumption. Relief policies for hard-hit sectors such as catering, retail, tourism, civil aviation, and road, waterway and railway transportation will be promptly and fully delivered, and local authorities encouraged to intensify support and assistance for these sectors, to stabilize more market entities in consumer services. The supply and price stability of essential consumer goods will be ensured, and logistics kept smooth.

A host of large-scale warehouses with comprehensive functions will be planned in a well-calibrated manner and built on the outskirts of cities to mobilize living necessities in close vicinity in case of emergency. New types of consumption will be promoted. Integration of online and brick-and-mortar consumption will be accelerated, and "smart plus" consumption such as smart products and services will be cultivated and strengthened. "Financial institutions should enhance support for consumption of big-ticket items. Meanwhile, such consumption should be made more available in rural areas to help improve people's lives," Li said. Consumption in priority areas will be expanded. Consumption of such services as medical and health care, elderly care, and child care will be promoted, and the private sector will be supported in providing such services to shore up the weak links. Spending on home appliances, automobiles, and other big-ticket items will be encouraged. No new restrictive measures on car purchase shall be set at the sub-national level. Localities with purchase restrictions already in place should increase new license plate quota step by step.

Consumption of new-energy vehicles and construction of battery charging facilities will be supported. Consumer spending potential of counties and townships will be further tapped. Commerce distribution businesses and e-commerce platforms will be guided toward bringing their services to rural areas, and consumption of brand and higher-quality products will be promoted in rural areas. Reform will be deepened to remove consumption constraints. Sound and steady development of consumption platforms will be advanced. Financial institutions will be encouraged to develop a greater variety of consumer financial products. Construction of key projects will be expedited, and consumption-related infrastructure development may be funded by local government special-purpose bonds, to leverage the catalytic role of investment in expanding consumption.

Irregularities such as counterfeiting, pricing fraud and false advertising will be punished pursuant to law. To help ease the difficulties facing foreign trade firms and promote stable growth of import and export, export rebates will be better utilized as an inclusive and equitable policy tool that is consistent with international rules, and the business environment for foreign trade will be improved on multiple fronts. "The fast growth of import and export last year contributed significantly to the stable economic activity. Yet pressure is mounting in maintaining steady growth of foreign

trade this year," Li said. "We must work hard to maintain stability in foreign trade. All departments concerned should work in concert and implement relevant measures fully on the ground." Export rebates will be better aligned with export credit insurance. Export credit insurance indemnities received by foreign trade enterprises will be regarded as foreign exchange receipts and rebates will be provided accordingly.

The coverage of the departure tax refund policy will be expanded, and facilitation measures such as tax refund upon purchase will be promoted. The process for export rebates will be expedited. Cross-departmental data sharing will be enhanced, paperwork required for export rebates will be simplified, and the entire process from declaration, to review and feedback will be handled online. The average time needed for export rebates will be further cut from seven to no more than six working days this year. Integrated foreign trade service firms will be supported in handling export rebates on behalf of manufacturers. The business environment for foreign trade will be improved. Customs clearance for returning export goods will be made more efficient. Policies will be devised to support the development of overseas warehouses and facilitate cross-border e-commerce returns and exchanges. Enterprises with better credit record will enjoy greater facilitation in customs clearance and tax refund. Malpractices such as false export and fraudulent tax rebates will be punished to the full extent of law.

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## **China Forges Ahead for Brighter Future in Digital Economy**

Three years into the pandemic, when it is imperative for the world to reboot the sluggish economy, China has made headway in digitizing the economy to dynamic growth, according to experts and enterprises. China fronts the world in the development of the digital economy, according to Qian Kun, senior vice president and general manager of Qualcomm Technology Licensing (QTL) China. He made the remark at the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) Annual Conference 2022. He envisioned that the global digital economy will rank in at 1.3 billion U.S. dollars in 2035, while China will take up over 10 percent of the total by then. "The economy will be sizable and profitable," Qian added.

### **AVANT-GARDE PLAYER**

In China, digital economic activities have grown exponentially in the past years and have gradually become one of the dominant forces in the national economy. In 2020, China's digital economy maintained a high growth rate of 9.7 percent to 39.2 trillion yuan (about 6.16 trillion U.S. dollars), reaching upwards of an estimated 38.6 percent of the national GDP. As part of the digital information infrastructure, the number of 5G base stations in the country totaled 1.43 million as of early March. The number of 5G users topped 500 million. These figures mirrored the country's constant efforts in promoting economic digitalization. China has made the development of the digital

economy a national strategy since 2012, and released detailed roadmaps and incentives to shore up the sector. This year's government work report also included support for the digital sector, calling for strengthening overall planning for the Digital China initiative, building more digital information infrastructure, developing an integrated national system of big data centers step by step, and applying 5G technology on a larger scale. "With these efforts, Chinese companies got the chance to give full play to their capabilities, gaining an upper hand in the global market," Qian said.

### **PREVENTIVE REGULATION**

However, experts also warned of the risks behind the continuous emergence of cutting-edge technologies and tremendous data flows. "Despite the high-speed growth during the past years, we must recognize that problems like data abuse, excessive data mining and disordered data processing exist," Lu Jinghui, chief security officer of Vivo Mobile Communications Co., Ltd., said at the BFA. To govern the energetic yet nascent sector, China has rolled out multiple regulatory measures in a timely manner, preventing it from being free-wheeling while maintaining its vigor. Two new Chinese laws dealing with data security and personal information came into force in 2021, providing more details about the data localization, data export and data protection requirements. In an effort to rein in anti-monopoly in the digital era, the country initiated multiple anti-trust and anti-unfair competition probes as well as data security checks on major platform firms, from internet and tech giants to e-commerce companies. China will strengthen oversight and law enforcement in the coming year in key areas, including the platform economy, sci-tech innovation, and information security, said Zhang Gong, head of the State Administration for Market Regulation, China's top market regulator.

### **SHARED FUTURE**

China has also been active in seeking cooperation with the international community to promote digital trade and governance. Last November, China had filed an application to join the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement (DEPA), a new type of trade partnership agreement signed by Chile, New Zealand and Singapore seeking to bolster digital trade by regulating the digital economy, including digital inclusion, data flows and protection and artificial intelligence. The application to join DEPA is in line with China's direction of further deepening domestic reform and expanding high-level opening-up, and will help the country strengthen digital economy cooperation with other members, according to the Ministry of Commerce. "We appreciate China's application to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership and DEPA," said Damien O'Connor, Minister for Trade and Export Growth of New Zealand, noting that China has become New Zealand's largest e-commerce market since the bilateral free trade agreement (FTA) came into effect in 2008.

He also expected that the upgraded bilateral FTA that take effect recently will further

facilitate the digital trade between the two sides. Moreover, the country is willing to share its digital dividends with the rest of the world. The country has offered digital aid in the form of technology, equipment and services to less developed countries. According to a white paper titled "China and Africa in the New Era: A Partnership of Equals," Chinese companies have participated in a number of submarine cable projects connecting Africa and Europe, Asia. More than half of the continent's wireless sites and high-speed mobile broadband networks were built by Chinese companies. In total, more than 200,000 km of optical fiber has been laid, giving broadband Internet access to 6 million households in Africa, and serving more than 900 million local people, the white paper said. Countries in the world should work together to jointly boost the development of the digital economy at this crucial juncture, said Damien O'Connor.

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## **China's Cross-border E-commerce Gains Growth Momentum, Bolsters Consumption**

China's cross-border e-commerce has gained momentum amid the COVID-19 epidemic, providing broader market opportunities and driving domestic consumption growth. The market size of cross-border e-commerce in China topped 14.6 trillion yuan (about 2.25 trillion U.S. dollars) in 2021, putting the compound annual growth rate of the market at approximately 18 percent in the past five years, according to a report published by the global consultancy firm EY. The penetration of cross-border e-commerce has also risen, with the rate reaching 40 percent last year, data from the report showed. "China's cross-border e-commerce market has remained on a fast track since 2015," said the report, giving credit to the country's supportive policies. China began setting up cross-border e-commerce pilot zones as early as 2015 in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, to trial the new business form and digitalize its trade channels.

In February, the country revealed its sixth batch of 27 cross-border e-commerce pilot zones, bringing the total to 132. China's cross-border e-commerce has achieved coordinated development across different regions, said the Ministry of Commerce. The pilot zones have covered almost all provincial-level regions in China from coastal manufacturing hub of Guangdong to inland port city of Alashankou in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. China's cross-border e-commerce imports and exports climbed 15 percent year on year to 1.98 trillion yuan in 2021. In the first quarter this year, cross-border e-commerce trade scale hit 434.5 billion yuan, said the commerce ministry. Cross-border e-commerce has also offset the pandemic, as more consumers switched to online shopping to avoid face-to-face contact, according to the EY report.

Chinese consumer activities weakened in March as resurgences of COVID-19

impeded catering and travelling activities. However, online sales performed well, with the figure rising 6.6 percent year on year to reach about 3.01 trillion yuan in the January-March period. A 2020-2021 research report on China's cross-border e-commerce imports by iiMedia Research showed that 67.1 percent of interviewees said they had purchased products on cross-border e-commerce platforms. With China's further opening-up, gradual improvement in the cross-border e-commerce system and people's increasing income, residents' demand for imported goods will continue to rise and bring about further increases to consumption, said iiMedia Research.

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## **Chinese Political Advisors Pool Wisdom on Rural Healthcare**

China's top political advisory body convened a biweekly consultation session on Tuesday at which attendees contributed their suggestions on promoting healthcare in rural areas. Presiding over the session was Wang Yang, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. He called for greater input and institutional improvement to build a rural healthcare system that is suitable to the current development stage, offers health services that are equally accessible to rural residents, and runs in a sustainable manner. Ten political advisors spoke at the session, with almost 80 more voicing their opinions via a mobile platform. Recognizing the steady improvement of medical services in rural areas and the important role of rural medical facilities and medical workers in fighting COVID-19, attendees called for continuous efforts to address imbalance and inadequacy within the rural healthcare system, enable close coordination of medical services, medical insurance and medicine supply, and build a strong team of medical workers. Attendees made suggestions such as planning and making use of healthcare resources in an integrated manner across an entire county, highlighting the functions of primary-level medical facilities in monitoring, preventing and treating age-related diseases, chronic diseases and endemic diseases, as well as spurring the enthusiasm of medical professionals at the primary level with incentives such as career growth and wage increases.

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## **President Xi Calls for Advancing Infrastructure Development**

Chinese President Xi Jinping, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, chairman of the Central Military Commission, and director of the Central Commission for Financial and Economic Affairs (CCFEA), presided over the 11th meeting of the CCFEA on Tuesday to discuss matters on

comprehensively advancing infrastructure development and implementing decisions and plans made by the CCFEA since the 19th CPC National Congress in 2017. Infrastructure is the bedrock for economic and social development. It is essential to coordinate development and security and optimize the layout, structure, function and development mode of infrastructure to develop a modern infrastructure system, thus laying a solid foundation for fully building a modern socialist country, Xi stressed. The CCFEA is an important institution for the CPC Central Committee to exercise leadership over economic work. All regions and departments must fully understand the commission's decisions and plans and take concerted efforts to put them into practice.

Premier Li Keqiang, a member of the Standing Committee of the CPC Central Committee Political Bureau, and deputy director of the CCFEA, Wang Huning, a member of the Standing Committee of the CPC Central Committee Political Bureau, a member of the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee, and also a member of the CCFEA, Vice Premier Han Zheng, a member of the Standing Committee of the CPC Central Committee Political Bureau, and also a member of the CCFEA, attended the meeting. The National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and the Ministry of Water Resources delivered reports on advancing infrastructure development. The National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, the Ministry of Emergency Management and the People's Bank of China delivered reports on the implementation of the CCFEA's decisions and plans since 2017.

Since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, China has made a series of world leading achievements in major sci-tech facilities, water conservancy projects, transportation hubs, information infrastructure and national strategic reserves, witnessing leapfrog progress in its overall infrastructure development, according to the meeting. But it's important to note that China's infrastructure development still falls short of the needs of the national development and security. Advancing infrastructure development is of great significance to ensuring national security, facilitating economic flows, promoting positive interplay between domestic circulation and international circulation, expanding domestic demand and promoting high-quality development. The commission stressed that at present and for some time to come, we must stick to the people-centered development philosophy and stay focused on solving problems and achieving goals. We also need to balance development and security imperatives, ensure systematic planning and overall coordination, and shore up weak links in a targeted way.

It called for improving the layout, structure, function and development mode of infrastructure, and mobilizing all of society to build a modern infrastructure network,

which should ensure not only economic benefits, but also social, ecological and security benefits. All these will serve major national strategies, support economic and social development and lay a solid foundation for building a modern socialist country in all respects. The commission underlined the need to stay future-oriented while advancing infrastructure development. We will increase support for development and protection of territorial space, distribution of productive forces and major national strategies, and speed up the construction of new types of infrastructure while upgrading traditional ones. It is necessary to act proactively, it said.

Plans will be made for building infrastructure that helps drive industrial development and safeguard national security, but the pace of forward planning should be kept appropriate. Sound plans should be made. Following the new development philosophy, we will proceed from a full lifecycle perspective to balance the layout of all types of infrastructure and promote interconnectivity, shared growth through collaboration, coordination and interaction, said the commission. A multi-pronged approach should be taken to advance infrastructure development at different levels on a categorized basis by fully leveraging the roles of government and market, central and regional authorities, as well as public and private capital. Benefits count. We will consider economic benefits over a broad horizon, and improve the comprehensive returns of infrastructure projects throughout their entire lifecycle.

We must improve all types of networks as part of China's infrastructure, such as those for transportation, energy and water conservancy, with a focus on increasing their interconnectivity, shoring up weak links and consolidating strong links, so as to increase their benefits, the commission noted. We will build the framework for national integrated multidimensional transportation networks at a faster pace. We will improve the planning and construction of coastal and inland harbors and waterways to upgrade the national water transportation system. We will develop distributed smart grids, build a series of new green, low-carbon energy bases, and improve the oil and gas pipelines quickly. We will accelerate the building of the framework and arteries of national waterways, with a focus on developing and modernizing major water sources, irrigated areas and flood detention basins. Infrastructure for information, science and technology, and logistics industries needs to be upgraded.

Plans will be made to build facilities for a new generation of supercomputing, cloud computing, AI platforms, and broadband networks. The planning and construction of major sci-tech infrastructure will be advanced. We will build comprehensive transportation hubs as well as related collection, distribution, and transportation systems. We will also formulate plans to build a host of regional, general, and freight transport airports. Urban infrastructure will be improved to create high-quality living spaces in cities. It requires efforts to promote integrated transportation in city clusters, build convenient and highly efficient intercity rail networks, develop intra-city railways and urban rail transit systems, and build comprehensive road traffic systems. It is also important to construct underground utility tunnels in an orderly manner and

develop the systems for urban flood control, drainage, as well as sewage and garbage collection and disposal. Moreover, efforts will be redoubled to build disaster prevention and mitigation infrastructure, public health emergency facilities, and smart infrastructure of road, power supply, public transportation.

Agricultural and rural infrastructure will also be improved so that modernized infrastructure will advance agricultural and rural modernization. We will improve farmland irrigation and water conservancy, build high-standard cropland, and ensure rural roads are well built, managed, maintained, and operated to upgrade rural transportation systems. We will also speed up construction of urban and rural cold-chain logistics facilities, launch large-scale water supply projects, and further build rural sewage and garbage collection and treatment facilities. In addition, we must strengthen the national security infrastructure and move faster to enhance our ability to respond to extreme situations. The commission stressed the need to increase support for infrastructure development.

Under the unified leadership of the CPC Central Committee, we will establish a coordination mechanism for major infrastructure development, to coordinate infrastructure planning and development in various sectors and regions and ensure the supply of land, sea, energy and other resources and factors of production. To meet the financing needs for infrastructure development, we will expand long-term financing channels, increase fiscal input, and better secure the fund for the development of major national infrastructure projects. We will also standardize the public-private partnership (PPP) model to ensure its development in transparency, and guide private capital into the operation of municipal utilities. We must pursue innovation-driven growth, increase research and development in core technologies, and make sure our infrastructure-related technologies are self-supporting and their risks are better controlled. It is necessary to cultivate a host of scientists and researchers, expand the team of skilled workers, and train a large number of outstanding engineers.

Since the 19th CPC National Congress, the CCFEA has carried out in-depth studies on a number of major issues of fundamental and far-reaching significance and provided strategic guidance, the commission noted. To strengthen the leadership of the CPC Central Committee over economic work, we need to emphasize political guidance and adopt a holistic approach. We also need to coordinate development and security, formulate sound strategies, and advance innovation in practice and theory. Moreover, both short-term and long-term needs must be taken into account, both symptoms and root causes addressed, and all policies implemented to the letter. The commission stressed the need to coordinate development and security and bear firmly in mind the possibility of worst scenarios. It is important to strengthen the capacity to forecast and preempt major risks and draw up feasible contingency plans and measures.



All regions and departments should grasp the essence of the commission's decisions and plans, take on responsibilities, act proactively, and work together to put into practice these decisions and plans. Evaluation and supervision should be tightened to properly balance efforts in all sectors so that problems will be addressed as soon as they arise. Evaluations should be based on practical results to ensure decisions and plans are fully implemented. It is essential to appropriately guide market expectations, clarify the orientation and principles of policy, and maintain market confidence. Inspections should also be strengthened and follow-up oversight be carried out to ensure effectiveness in policy implementation. Other members of the commission attended the meeting and leading officials of relevant central departments were also present.

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## **China Strives to Push for Peace and Development in Stormy Times**

The Russia-Ukraine conflict is one shock too many for the world economy struggling to get back on its feet from the COVID-19 pandemic. Rising energy prices have pushed inflation in many countries to the highest levels in decades. Food insecurity is deepening across the Middle East and Africa that heavily rely on imports from Russia and Ukraine. Nations that should have stood together in such trying times are drifting apart, impacted by power politics, unilateralism and protectionism. Given the risks and challenges, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank slashed their global growth forecast for 2022 earlier this month. "To put it simply: we are facing a crisis on top of a crisis," said IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva. Sustainable growth requires a peaceful economic and political environment. Therefore, in light of the widening development gap and peace deficit, Chinese President Xi Jinping has proposed a series of initiatives to address global challenges while rejuvenating global development.

### **BALANCING ACT**

Over the past two years, China's economy has delivered an impressive performance despite the pandemic, and is now growing steadily. Adapting to challenges at home and abroad better than expected, China notched a GDP growth rate of 4.8 percent in the first quarter year on year, beating estimates of 4.4 percent and outperforming the 4-percent rate registered in the previous quarter. The rate is hard-won, with the country grappling with an upsurge in COVID-19 cases and the impact of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. China has adhered to a dynamic zero-COVID policy tailored to its national realities, clearing infections promptly and tweaking it in line with an evolving situation on the ground. Human beings are one of the most decisive factors in guaranteeing robust productivity. Behind China's arduous efforts to strike a balance between epidemic control and socio-economic development is the value of putting human lives first and focusing on the greater common good, as illustrated by

"Xiconomics," the Chinese president's economic philosophy. Whether in the financial hub of Shanghai or elsewhere in the country, an effective epidemic control remains a precondition for economic growth in the long run and an optimal choice at present.

The dynamic zero-COVID approach yields better results "on every measure, from death rates to economic growth," said New Scientist, a London-based magazine covering science and technology. "If the target of zero COVID is now being ditched, does that mean it was a failure? A crude answer would be: only if you think saving lives and preserving economic growth constitutes a misstep," it said. Moreover, to retain sound fundamentals over the long haul, China is rolling out policies to support enterprises, stabilize employment and maintain a prudent monetary policy, practicing its "dual circulation" model that emphasizes both growing exports and expanded domestic demand. "The fundamentals of the Chinese economy -- its strong resilience, enormous potential, vast room for maneuver and long-term sustainability -- remain unchanged," Xi said last week in his keynote speech via video at the opening ceremony of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2022. "They will provide great dynamism for the stability and recovery of the world economy and broader market opportunities for all countries," Xi said.

#### **CONTINUED CONFIDENCE**

Although it marked down China's growth forecast for this year in its latest report, the IMF expressed confidence in its outlook of the world's second-largest economy. "We see China capable of boosting the economy, because it has ample policy space," the agency's chief said last week. "We have seen in the last days, the People's Bank of China taking action to ease conditions for access to credit," Georgieva said. "And it also has space in terms of fiscal policy." It takes good iron to make good products, a Chinese saying goes. China has been leading by example on how a science-based economic philosophy unleashes growth momentum at home and drives regional and global development with positive spillovers. According to Bloomberg, Chinese policy over the past two years "has prevented a huge number of deaths at home and ensured that everything from iPhones and Teslas to fertilizer and car parts continues to flow to the rest of the world." The alternative "could bring global supply chains to a halt, sending inflation higher," Bloomberg said. In the first quarter of this year, China's total imports and exports expanded 10.7 percent year on year to 9.42 trillion yuan (about 1.47 trillion U.S. dollars), the seventh consecutive quarter of growth.

The country retains its appeal to regional and global investors with a fully-established industrial chain, industrial clusters and a massive consumer market. Foreign direct investment into the Chinese mainland, in actual use, went up 31.7 percent year on year to 59.09 billion dollars in the first quarter of the year. Inflows into the country's high-tech industries logged a sharp yearly increase of 52.9 percent, according to official data. According to a survey last year by the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai, 60 percent of more than 300 U.S. companies operating in China reported increased investment compared with 2020. Continued confidence in China can also be found in the annual Business Confidence Survey 2021 published by the

European Union Chamber of Commerce in China. Only 9 percent of nearly 600 European companies operating in China planned to shift any current or planned investment out of the country, the lowest share on record. "China's economy continues to have massive growth potential," said Khairy Tourk, a professor of economics with the Stuart School of Business at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago. "I feel quite optimistic about the country realizing its potential." On the supply side, China has a blueprint for changing its economy from a low-end manufacturer to a high-end producer, said Tourk. "This has advantages in raising people's living standards and acting as a hedge against external shocks."

### **INITIATIVES FOR COMMON GOOD**

While managing steady and high-quality growth within its border, China has always been ready to join others in promoting common prosperity for the whole world. At the General Debate of the 76th Session of the UN General Assembly in 2021, Xi put forward a Global Development Initiative (GDI), which emphasizes openness, coordination and sharing. Together with the Belt and Road Initiative, the GDI comes as another endeavor by Beijing to boost inclusive and common development around the world. Over the past few years, the China-Laos Railway unlocked the landlocked country and connected it to markets as far away as in Europe. China-Europe Freight Trains travel across the Eurasian continent, transporting goods and sustaining global supply chains despite disruptions from the pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict. At the Boao Forum last week, the Chinese president further elaborated on his vision for building peace and sustainable development, quoting an ancient Chinese philosopher: "Stability brings a country prosperity while instability leads a country to poverty."

Security is the precondition for development, both for a country and the world, especially in an era of globalization. To improve global governance in this regard, Xi proposed a Global Security Initiative, calling for joint efforts to maintain peace and stability worldwide. "We humanity are living in an indivisible security community," Xi said. "China will unswervingly follow the path of peaceful development and always be a builder of world peace, a contributor to global development, and a defender of the international order," Xi noted. His appeals have been warmly embraced. Surakiart Sathirathai, former deputy prime minister of Thailand, said that the Global Security Initiative reflects Xi's global view and governance philosophy. By shaping a fair and rational global security governance system, the world will be more stable, which is conducive to greater development and cooperation, Sathirathai said. "Looking into history, it is safe to say that China will successfully navigate the current challenges to register sustained growth," said Cavince Adhere, a Kenya-based international relations scholar. Through China-proposed initiatives, "China is galvanizing like-minded countries to promote alternative and liberalized economic and political systems that serve the collective interest of all countries," he said.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 04/27/2022

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## **China Revs Up Infrastructure Investment to Spur Growth**

Investment, a traditional key driver of China's economic growth, is unleashing new energy as the central authorities have made fresh arrangements to modernize the country's infrastructure for sustained growth. The arrangements were made at a meeting of the Central Committee for Financial and Economic Affairs earlier this week, involving a variety of construction needs from urban and rural facilities, digital networks, and industrial upgrades to national security. Regarding infrastructure as a pillar for economic and social development, the meeting stressed the significant role of infrastructure construction in ensuring national security, smoothing domestic circulation, facilitating the circulation of domestic and overseas markets, expanding domestic demand and promoting high-quality development. Long Haibo, a researcher with the Development Research Center of the State Council, said the meeting sent a signal that the central government attaches great importance to strengthening infrastructure construction. The move will further expand domestic demand, improve the resilience of industrial and supply chains, and meet people's expectations for a high-quality life, Long said. Facing the triple pressure of shrinking demand, supply shock, and weakening expectation, China has scaled up support for major projects amid efforts to expand effective investment, generate more economic activities and boost growth.

### **INFRASTRUCTURE ON FAST TRACK**

For excavator operators in China, the past few months were rather busy, with the industrial index indicating solid expansion of infrastructure construction and accelerated investment growth. The excavator index tracked by leading construction gear maker Sany Heavy Industry Co., Ltd. shows the average workload of construction machinery steadily accelerated across the country in March. The industry data, which suggests a rebound in construction activities, was in line with the country's fixed-asset investment that jumped 9.3 percent from a year earlier to 10.49 trillion yuan (about 1.6 trillion U.S. dollars) in the first quarter, according to the National Bureau of Statistics. Despite the challenges from COVID-19 resurgence on investment growth, the country has the toolbox to keep investment stable, said the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) at a recent press conference. The country plans to issue a total of 3.65 trillion yuan of special-purpose bonds for local governments in 2022, while 1.2 trillion yuan of such bonds issued in the fourth quarter last year are also expected to shore up investment. As China looks to quicken the issuance of local government bonds to support infrastructure construction, analysts expect that more pro-investment policies will be rolled out in the coming months to facilitate funding, land use and energy supply.

### **NEW INFRASTRUCTURE FOR DIGITAL FUTURE**

While traditional infrastructures such as roads and airports connect goods and people, new digital infrastructures connect data, enabling the introduction of new

types of products and services as well as new manufacturing systems and business models. From cloud computing and artificial intelligence platforms to data centers and the industrial internet, China has channeled more investment to advance the development of new infrastructure. During the first three months of the year, some 81,000 5G base stations were built across the country, bringing the total to over 1.5 million, official data showed.

According to estimates by Industrial Securities, the increase in new infrastructure investment in China this year is expected to reach 180 billion yuan. Among the investment projects is an integrated national big-data system project. This mega project launched in February involves establishing eight national computing hubs in the country, plus 10 national data center clusters. Since the beginning of this year, 25 projects of 10 national data center clusters have started construction, driving investment of more than 190 billion yuan, the NDRC said. The investment in big data centers is expected to grow at an annual rate of over 20 percent during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-2025), driving the total investment to over 3 trillion yuan, according to the NDRC.

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## **Chinese Leadership Analyzes Economic Situation, Reviews Plan on Talent Development**

Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, on Friday presided over a meeting of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee to analyze the current economic situation and economic work. The meeting also reviewed a plan for talent development during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-2025). The meeting highlighted the hard-won achievements since the beginning of this year in coordinating epidemic control with economic and social development, as China secured a stable economic performance and successfully hosted the Beijing 2022 Olympic Winter Games and the Beijing 2022 Paralympic Winter Games. Noting that the economy faces growing complexities and uncertainties, the meeting stressed the importance of economic stability and ensuring and improving people's livelihoods.

The meeting called for upholding the "people first, lives first" principle and the dynamic zero-COVID approach to protect people's lives and health, and minimize the impact of the epidemic on economic and social development. China should step up macro policy adjustment and work hard to achieve annual economic and social development goals, and keep the economy running within a reasonable range, according to the meeting. The meeting called for faster implementation of policies that have already been formulated, noting that various monetary tools should be well utilized. All-out efforts should be made to expand domestic demand, give full play to effective investment, reinforce infrastructure construction and let consumption

facilitate economic circulation. A raft of policies should be rolled out to help micro, small and medium-sized companies and individually-owned businesses tide over difficulties, while keeping the supply and prices of energy and resources stable and ensuring spring farming.

On improving people's livelihood, the country should stabilize and expand employment and ensure the operation of core functions of cities. Smooth logistics nationwide must be ensured, while key industrial and supply chains, key infrastructure facilities as well as designated firms responsible for market supply during the epidemic should maintain normal operation. The meeting stressed efforts to ensure that no systemic risks emerge and reiterated the principle that "housing is for living in, not for speculation." Efforts should be made to better real estate policies based on local realities and meet demand for rigid housing and better housing. On the capital market, the meeting said China's registration-based initial public offering system should be promoted steadily, long-term investors should be attracted and stable market operation should be maintained. Specific measures should be rolled out to support the standardized and healthy development of the platform economy, it said.

The meeting also stressed deepening the supply-side structural reform, and building a strong and resilient national economic circulation system. Efforts should be made to expand high-level opening-up, said the meeting, adding that demands from foreign enterprises for a convenient business environment should be given proactive responses, in a bid to stabilize foreign trade and investment fundamentals. In terms of the plan for talent development, the meeting called for comprehensive efforts to cultivate and attract talent, and bring their potential into full play. The meeting called for accelerating the building of world-class hubs for talent and innovation, with Beijing, Shanghai and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area serving as demonstration areas. Calling for more efforts to foster scientists with strategic value and give full play to their roles, the meeting stressed nurturing leading talent and innovation teams in science and technology, as well as a large number of outstanding engineers.

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## **Endeavors Required to Promote Economic Work and Talent Development**

Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, presided over a meeting of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee to analyze the current economic situation and economic work on Friday. At the meeting, the National Talent Development Plan during the 14th Five-Year Plan Period (2021-2025) was also reviewed. The political bureau noted that this year, against the backdrop of a pandemic and drastic changes both unseen in a century,

all regions and departments, under the strong leadership of the CPC Central Committee with Xi Jinping at its core, have effectively coordinated COVID-19 response with economic and social development. China's economy has witnessed a steady start. We also successfully hosted the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics and Paralympics. All these are hard-won. With the COVID-19 pandemic and Ukraine crisis bringing more risks and challenges, the environment for China's economic development has become increasingly complicated, grim and uncertain, and new challenges have arisen in keeping economic growth, employment and prices stable, the political bureau noted. It is of vital importance to deliver in our economic work, and to ensure and improve the people's wellbeing.

We must stay confident, overcome difficulties and ensure that the CPC Central Committee's major policies are carried out to the letter. The CPC Central Committee has made it clear that we must contain the epidemic, stabilize the economy and keep development secure, according to the meeting. In response to the new features of virus variants and their transmission, we must efficiently coordinate COVID response with economic and social development, put the people and their lives first, guard against imported cases and domestic resurgences, and follow a dynamic zero-COVID policy. By doing so, the health and safety of the people are protected to the fullest, and the pandemic's impact on economic and social development is reduced to the minimum. We will step up macroeconomic adjustment to stabilize the economy, meet the objectives set for economic and social development in 2022, and keep major economic indicators within an appropriate range. We will move faster to implement established policies, press ahead with tax refund and reduction and fee cuts, and better use a range of monetary policy tools, according to the meeting.

We will promptly design additional policy tools, strengthen well-timed regulation, and make sure goal-oriented policies are formulated in a timely manner and given some leeway. We will make all-out efforts to expand domestic demand, give full play to the role of effective investment, ensure support for projects in terms of land and energy use as well as environmental impact assessment, and advance infrastructure development across the board. We will give full play to the role of consumption in facilitating economic flows. To keep stable the operations of market entities, we will carry out a package of policies to help industries as well as micro, small and medium enterprises and self-employed individuals hit hard by COVID-19 to overcome difficulties. The supply and price stability of energy resources will be ensured, so will spring farming and preparations for plowing. We will ensure and improve people's living standards, stabilize and expand employment, ensure the supply of essential goods and the performance of cities' core functions, and enhance workplace safety to maintain overall social stability.

We must keep in mind a full picture of national development to ensure unimpeded transportation and logistics, and the normal operations of key industrial and supply chains, suppliers for COVID response, and critical infrastructure. The political bureau

stressed the need to effectively control major risks and guard against systemic risks. Housing is for living in, not for speculation. Greenlight should be given to local governments to improve their real estate policies according to their specific conditions. People's demand for buying their first homes and improving housing conditions should receive due support. The oversight on advance payment for commodity housing should be optimized. All these are meant to promote steady and sound development of the real estate market. It is necessary to respond to market concerns in a timely manner, steadily advance the reform on a registration-based IPO system, and attract long-term investors to ensure the smooth operation of the capital market. The platform economy must develop in a healthy way. Rectifications for it will be completed, regular supervision will be initiated and specific measures to support its standardized and sound growth will be unveiled.

It is essential to manage our own affairs well, according to the meeting. We should accelerate the creation of a new development pattern, deepen supply-side structural reform, solve the problems encountered in development through reform, and move faster toward greater self-reliance in science and technology to develop a robust and resilient economy. To pursue high-standard opening up, it is vital to actively respond to the demands of foreign-funded companies for a better business environment and maintain the overall stability of foreign trade and foreign investment. Officials at all levels should always keep in mind their duties, take on responsibilities, and remain realistic and pragmatic. All types of "black swan" and "grey rhino" events must be preempted. Party committees and governments at all levels must unite and lead officials and people in striving together to set the stage for the 20th National Congress of the CPC with concrete actions. The formulation of the National Talent Development Plan during the 14th Five-Year Plan Period (2021-2025) is an important task arranged by the CPC Central Committee, a concrete step to implement the guiding principles of the Central Talent Work Conference, and also an important part of China's 14th Five-Year Plan, according to the meeting. It is vital to strengthen the CPC's leadership over talent-related work across the board.

Strategic role of talent in advancing development should be firmly established, therefore cultivating, introducing and utilizing talent well in an all-round way. It is essential to set priorities and progress gradually in accelerating efforts to build talent centers and innovation hubs of global importance, according to the meeting. Beijing, Shanghai and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area should aim high and strive to lead in building themselves into hubs for innovative talent. Other major talent-rich cities should also take strong steps to build platforms for attracting and pooling talent, so that pacesetters and strategic nodes for China's talent development will take shape very soon. It is important to cultivate strategic scientists and put them to good use, and also foster large numbers of world-class leaders and innovation teams in science and technology, young scientists and researchers, as well as outstanding engineers.



Particular importance should be attached to the fostering of talent in the fields of basic research, and steady support and guarantee should be ensured for them on a long-term basis. Reform in the talent development mechanisms and systems should be deepened to create platforms for outstanding personnel of various types to pursue their career. Party committees (groups) at all levels should fully assume their principal responsibilities. They should refine the overall leadership of the Party over personnel work and take coordinated steps to ensure major measures in this regard are put into practice. They should work to help solve difficulties for personnel and those hiring them, guide them in raising political awareness, and enroll them. In this way, talent will remain committed to the Party and the nation, dedicate themselves to their career, keep the motherland in their hearts, and serve the people. Other matters were also discussed at the meeting.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 04/29/2022

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## **JAPAN: More Babies, Starts Subsidizing Costly IVF Needed**

The wait to see the doctor at Japan's popular fertility clinic Saint Mother Hospital just got longer. Starting yesterday, public health insurance will reimburse 70 percent of the costs of advanced fertility treatments as part of the government's attempt to halt a decline in one of the world's fastest-aging populations. Atsushi Tanaka, doctor and director of Saint Mother in Kita Kyushu, southern Japan, expects more patients at his clinic, already packed with couples seeking treatments such as in-vitro fertilization (IVF) which previously cost over 500,000 yen (US\$4,090) per cycle — more than the average household's monthly income. "I think we'll see a huge number of patients," he said, adding that nationwide IVF attempts may even double. Yet Tanaka and other specialists say this won't be enough to reverse Japan's demographic decline, with patients still facing considerable costs, and insurance coverage excluding procedures such as genetic screening and the use of donor eggs. With the number of women of child-bearing age dropping off in the coming years, they said, the government needs to do more. Japan's experience will serve as a test case for advanced economies facing declining birth rates. While free, or mostly free, IVF treatments are already available in a handful of countries including Denmark and France, Japan is the biggest economy to subsidize most costs for such treatments.

From <https://www.newsonjapan.com> 04/02/2022

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## **Japan Gov't Economic Package to Include Oil Subsidies, Cash Handouts**

Japan will raise the upper limit of subsidies for oil wholesalers and provide handouts of 50,000 yen (\$390) per child for low-income households as part of an emergency economic package to cushion surging energy and food prices, government sources said Friday. Around 1.5 trillion yen from the government's reserve fund of 5.5 trillion

yen will be allocated to finance the envisaged package, which will also draw from a supplementary budget for fiscal 2022. The plan is set to be finalized next Tuesday. Japan intends to ensure an economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic through the relief package comprised of four pillars -- curbing oil prices, ensuring a stable food supply, providing support for small and medium-sized enterprises and helping struggling households. Subsidies to curb surging crude oil prices, a measure started in late January, will be used to further cut the average retail price of gasoline from 172 yen to 168 yen in the first half of the fiscal year. The subsidies, which will be raised from a maximum of 25 yen to 35 yen per liter, are to be phased out by the fall but could be extended depending on the situation.

Support will also be provided to industries that rely on fuel, such as taxi services, dry cleaning, agriculture, and forestry and fisheries. Struggling households that have become exempt from residential tax payments due to low income from this month will be eligible to receive 100,000 yen cash handouts. In addition, new grants local governments can use to support the "working poor" will also be distributed. Households eligible for cash handouts under a similar program the previous fiscal year through March 31 will be excluded. The central government has also proposed strengthening financial support for small and medium-sized enterprises and supporting businesses that switch from costly foreign wheat and lumber to domestically produced alternatives. The planned supplementary budget of more than 2.5 trillion yen for fiscal 2022 will be used to restore reserve funds and cover subsidies to curb oil prices through the fall. The Liberal Democratic Party and its junior coalition partner Komeito have agreed to submit the budget plan to parliament in late May, aiming to get it passed before the current Diet session ends on June 15, according to the parties' lawmakers.

From <https://nordot.app> 04/28/2022

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## **Kishida Vows to Raise 5G Coverage to 99 Pct in FY 2030**

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida set Thursday the "must-achieve goal" of increasing the coverage of 5G large-capacity ultrafast mobile networks to 99 pct of the population at the end of fiscal 2030. Kishida presented the goal at a government panel meeting to discuss his "digital garden city nation" initiative, aimed at revitalizing regional economies with the use of digital technologies and narrowing gaps between urban and rural areas in the country. For the initiative, it is necessary to improve communications infrastructure, including 5G networks, to ensure people's access to various information and services regardless of where they live. The 5G coverage rate, however, stood below 40 pct as of the end of fiscal 2020, or March 31 last year. At the meeting of the "new capitalism realization" panel, chaired by Kishida, the prime minister also said his government will make fiber-optic communications networks available at 99.9 pct of households by the end of fiscal 2027.

From <https://www.nippon.com> 04/28/2022

## **SOUTH KOREA: Senior Citizens Suffer High Rate of Relative Poverty Report**

The relative poverty rate of South Korean senior citizens has been on the decline, but is still high among member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) amid rapid aging, a report showed Wednesday. The relative poverty rate of South Koreans aged 66 or older came to 40.4 percent in 2020, down from 43.2 percent the previous year and 47.8 percent in 2011, according to the report on sustainable development goals by Statistics Korea. Relative poverty rate refers to the percentage of people living with an income below 50 percent of the median income. In 2020, the monthly median income of employees in South Korea came to 2.42 million won (US\$1,981).

The statistics agency issued the report to assess South Korea's implementation of the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals meant to end poverty and promote sustainable growth by 2030. The report showed that the relative poverty rate for the country's elderly people was 3.7 times higher than for people in the 18-65 age group. The ratio was the highest among 38 member countries of the OECD as of 2018, it said. Amid rapid aging, more elderly people are grappling with economic hardships as they find it difficult to land quality jobs after retirement and to live solely on pensions. South Korea became an aged society in 2017, in which the percentage of those aged 65 or older exceeded 14 percent of its population. The country is widely expected to become a super-aged society in 2025, when the percentage of the elderly will top 20 percent.

From <https://en.yna.co.kr> 04/06/2022

## **KSOE Successfully Tests Autonomous Passenger Ship in Cyberspace**

The Korea Shipbuilding & Offshore Engineering Co. (KSOE) said Tuesday it has succeeded in conducting a virtual test run of an autonomous passenger ship. KSOE, a subholding company of Hyundai Heavy Industries Holdings, said the company joined hands with its autonomous navigation subsidiary Avikus in carrying out the test at its hardware-in-the-loop simulation facility in Pangyo, south of Seoul. The test run demonstrated an autonomous passenger ship's navigation scenario, including departure, high-speed navigation and berthing, KSOE said. The virtual demonstration was based on the so-called Hyundai intelligent Digital Twin Ship Virtual Commissioning Solution using a twin digital, or a virtual model designed to accurately reflect a physical object. The trial run also utilized Avikus' autonomous navigation technology and electric propulsion, a liquefied natural gas (LNG) powered dual-fuel engine and a remote control smart solution, KSOE added.

"The demonstration is very meaningful since it has gone beyond a simple check of a ship's engine and inspected the safety of autonomous navigation," it said. "We will push to commercialize virtual test runs of ships." KSOE is currently building an autonomous passenger boat together with the Korea Institute for Advancement of Technology and the municipal government of Ulsan, an industrial city on the southeastern coast of the country. In January last year, KSOE succeeded in carrying out a virtual test run of an LNG carrier for the first time in the world. Hyundai Heavy Industries Holdings opened the simulation facility in 2017 and received a compliance certification for a digital twin model from the Norwegian accredited registrar and classification society DNV in December last year. In February this year, it obtained a Digital Twin Ready certification from Britain's Lloyd's Register. KSOE has three shipbuilding affiliates -- Hyundai Heavy Industries Co., Hyundai Mipo Dockyard Co. and Hyundai Samho Heavy Industries Co.

From <https://en.yna.co.kr> 04/19/2022

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## **Data Gathering Still Human Job in Digital Era Real Estate Platform CEO**

The pressure to accelerate the digitalization of industries as a result of the coronavirus has spread to the real estate sector. Using big data, the industry is automating the buying, selling and leasing of homes and office spaces instead of traditional real estate transactions through agencies. But some important information-gathering still has to be done by humans, according to the CEO of a local commercial real estate platform. "It is difficult for tenants to access necessary information required to lease an office including 'hard data,' such as the building owner's contact, information on facilities and vacancy rate. So as a middleman, we personally visit office buildings, interview the owners and gather that information scattered in the field," said Rsquare CEO Lee Johnwoo in an interview with The Korea Herald on April 11. The company's 80 staffers dedicated to data gathering also compile "soft data," such as the credibility of building owners -- whether they abide by the lease contract or frequently change lease terms, Lee said.

Although some building owners have been reluctant to share information, Rsquare staff continued to knock on their doors to build rapport, something that fancy AI can't do, Lee added. "Eventually, it all comes down to human effort." As a result, the Rsquare database currently contains information pertaining to 150,000 office buildings in the country. And about 80 percent of its clients renew their commercial leases with the company, including Shinhan Bank, Mirae Asset Life Insurance, and Hi Investment & Securities, the CEO said. Lee believes its business model can provide better services in Southeast Asian countries where tenants find it even more difficult than in Korea to access information when seeking office space. Rsquare opened its Vietnamese branch last year and has since compiled data on over 10,000

commercial buildings in Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi and other major cities.

“We have learned some real estate regulations limiting private transaction of lands and superstitious beliefs such as ‘feng shui,’ or the geometric evaluation of land, that decide what makes a good office location. But with our local staff, we are on track to create strong foothold there,” said Lee, adding that of the 30 employees, 25 are Vietnamese. Next year, Rsquare plans to enter the Indonesian market. Lee said it is aiming to boost overseas sales to account for 30 percent of the total sales revenue in the near future as well. Separately, the company has also jumped into the logistics business, offering to connect warehouse owners with clients looking to rent them. Up until now, it has gathered data on over 120,000 logistics centers in Korea. Based on research data analytics, Rsquare plans to provide more accurate information on warehouse investment for institutional investors, Lee said. Founded in 2009, Rsquare offers commercial real estate services, ranging from office leasing and brokerage to interior design and property data analysis.

From <http://www.koreaherald.com> 04/20/2022

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## **What Does Rise of Metaverse Hold for Future**

As the metaverse becomes more prevalent across all industries on the back of greater investments and technological advancements, The Korea Herald and the American Chamber of Commerce in Korea are co-hosting a forum to discuss what the next web revolution holds for the future. The joint forum, slated to be held on May 2 at Four Seasons Seoul, has invited a number of business leaders and experts in the metaverse sector to share their insights on the ascending metaverse and how it will play an integral role across various areas. Steve Park, Facebook parent Meta’s director of public policy in Korea and Japan, will open the session with a talk about the mechanism of metaverse technology and the global platform giant’s commitment to building the metaverse in Korea along with its programs and initiatives to contribute to the country’s augmented and virtual reality ecosystem.

Lee Mi-yeon, SK Telecom’s metaverse company partnership team leader, is expected to lay out how South Korea’s largest telecommunication firm by number of mobile subscribers will look to go global with its metaverse service, ifland. Patrick Yoon, Korea’s managing director at Crypto.com. will deliver a speech on global trends for the methods of digital transactions and nonfungible tokens. The presentations will be followed by a panel discussion on the implications of the metaverse for businesses, according to the organizers. The Korea Herald CEO Choi Jin-young and AmCham Korea Chairman and CEO James Kim will deliver the opening remarks. Science Minister Lim Hye-sook and Rep. Jo Seoung-lae, vice chair of the National Assembly’s Science, ICT, Broadcasting and Communications Committee, will also give congratulatory remarks at the event. Registration for the two-hour forum, which will provide simultaneous interpretation for Korean and

English, is scheduled to be closed Thursday. More information about the event is available on the website of AmCham Korea.

From <http://www.koreaherald.com> 04/24/2022

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## **NORTH KOREA: Crypto Theft Becomes 'Fundamental' to Illicit Financing Activities UN Expert**

North Korean state-sponsored cryptocurrency theft has become a “fundamental part” of the country’s illicit financing activities to fund its nuclear and missile programs, a United Nations independent expert said on Wednesday, urging the international community to reinforce its sanctions framework and regulations to block cyber financial crime. Eric Penton-Voak, a coordinator at the UN Security Council’s Panel of Experts (PoE) which monitors enforcement of sanctions on North Korea, cited cryptocurrency theft as the key reason for a “marked acceleration” in the country’s missile test launches over the last six months. Increasingly since around 2017, “a variety of sources of cryptocurrencies has become a fundamental part of (the) DPRK sanctions evasion framework, enabling their WMD programs to continue to develop,” Penton-Voak said during an event hosted by the Washington-based Center for a New American Security.

Penton-Voak underscored that the existing UN sanctions framework focusing on strictly restricting traditional financial services is not sufficient to deter and stop North Korea’s cyber-enabled financial crime. “It may be no coincidence that the words ‘cyber’ and ‘cryptocurrency’ do not actually appear in the UN sanctions resolutions,” he said. The UN PoE member emphasized that UNSC sanctions resolutions have not established any provisions that forbid cryptocurrency theft. He called on the international community to come up with ways to prevent North Korea from capitalizing on the weakness of cryptocurrency markets. “At present, it’s too easy and low risk for Lazarus and others to exploit the cutting edge of new financial technologies in order to steal funds,” Penton-Voak said. The Lazarus hacking group is believed to be controlled by North Korea’s primary intelligence bureau, the Reconnaissance General Bureau and responsible for major cyberattacks, including the 2017 WannaCry ransomware attacks.

“We see that DPRK cyber actors always go to the weakest point. They look at nonregulated areas. They look at really interesting and very gray, new areas of cryptocurrency because actually, A -- no one really understands them, and B -- they can exploit weakness,” Penton-Voak said. UN should step up efforts. North Korea state-sponsored hackers are very skilled at extorting cryptocurrency, a “very low cost and low risk means of stealing money,” the UN PoE member said. “They’re right on the cutting edge of cyber techniques, as you may have seen in the most recent hack of the Axie Infinity video game.” The US Federal Bureau of Investigation last Thursday publicly accused cyber hackers associated with the North Korean

government of stealing \$620 million worth of cryptocurrency from the nonfungible token-based Axie Infinity video game company in late March.

Following the massive crypto theft, the FBI, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency and the US Treasury Department on Monday issued a joint cybersecurity advisory. The advisory aims to “highlight the cyber threat associated with cryptocurrency thefts and tactics used by a North Korean state-sponsored advanced persistent threat (APT) group since at least 2020.” Penton-Voak underscored that blockchain analysis will be a central tool in tracking illicit financial flows and remain fundamental to any country’s ability to watch “bad guys.” But annual reports written by the PoE do not really reflect the central importance of cyber-enabled financial crime despite the gravity of the issue, he said, underlining that the PoE reports “really ought to focus on the most important means of sanctions evasion.” One of the difficulties in gathering information stems from the reluctance of UN member states to discuss how hacks happened and how extensive they were, he said.

“I do hope and expect that our reports in the future will rather better reflect the central importance of cyber-enabled financial crime to the DPRK,” Penton-Voak said. Penton-Voak expressed regret at the UN PoE’s sole focus on investigating cyber activities that violate UN sanctions, since they lack a mandate to look at broader cyber espionage or cyber warfare. “The sooner that DPRK methodologies can be exposed and understood, the sooner action can be taken by the cryptocurrency exchanges,” he said. N. Korea exploits vulnerabilities of crypto market. A US-based expert also pointed out that North Korea has advanced and utilized techniques such as cryptocurrency mixers and decentralized finance (DeFi) platforms particularly to launder funds, while exploiting the gap between technological advancements and regulation mechanisms. “We’ve noticed that the rate by which cryptocurrency and financial technologies evolve continues to far outpace the rate by which national governments and international institutions are able to regulate and understand them,” Jason Bartlett, a research associate for the Energy, Economics, and Security Program at the Center for a New American Security, said during the event.

“And this is a major vulnerability that the North Korean hackers continue to exploit.” Bartlett said “North Korea will likely continue to use these new and evolving financial technologies as they remain heavily vulnerable and unregulated compared to more traditional forms of finance.” Nick Carlsen, an analyst at the US blockchain intelligence company TRM Labs, said that more than 50 percent of major crypto hacks are conducted by North Korean hackers overall. Carlsen added that the North Korean regime has directly spearheaded cryptocurrency theft, pointing to the speed, efficiency, and “systemized process” in stealing, laundering, and converting cryptocurrency to fiat currency. “It’s basically the modern-day equivalent of the Barbary pirates. This is a country that is engaged in state-sponsored bank robbery. It’s not traditional espionage,” Carlsen said. “This is hundreds of millions of dollars



that are being used to support weapons programs and destabilizing activities. It's just a completely unique, singular target.”

From <http://www.koreaherald.com> 04/21/2022

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## South-East Asia

### **THAILAND: Ready to Import 160,000 Foreign Workers from Three Neighbouring Nations**

The Department of Employment (DOE) said Thailand is ready to allow in more than 160,000 foreign workers from three neighbouring countries under a memorandum of understanding. DOE director-general Pairoj Chotikasathien said on Wednesday that the Labour Ministry planned to solve the labour-shortage problem after many were worried that illegal immigrants would spread Covid-19. They also questioned the process to import foreign workers.

The ministry planned to solve the problem in two ways:

1. Open the country to 167,961 foreign workers from three nations under the MoU. Employers are seeking 117,029 Myanmar workers, 38,933 Cambodians and 11,999 Laotians. Precisely 144,709 workers have been given authorisation, with around 6,000 Cambodian and Lao workers set to work under the MoU. Employers are mostly seeking Myanmar workers, but there was an obstacle in bringing in these due to the political situation in that country, he said.
2. Thailand is likely to authorise work permits for 2,132,469 Myanmar, Lao and Cambodian workers so they can remain in the country. As for setting up a one-stop service point in their countries, it is a delicate move that cannot be carried out at the moment. Pairoj asked employers who want to hire illegal workers to first think of health safety and risks from Covid-19. He asked them not to hire such workers as the department will import them legally under the MoU.

From <https://www.nationthailand.com/> 04/07/2022

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### **VIETNAM: To Boost 5G Commercialisation**

5G is changing businesses worldwide, and Việt Nam is catching up very quickly, being among the first countries to deploy 5G trials. The Đầu tư (Investment) Newspaper organised a talk titled “Getting 5G Ready for Việt Nam's Digital Transformation” on Monday. All three major carriers, including VinaPhone, MobiFone, and Viettel, have started their 5G journey by announcing the trial of the service in big cities like Hà Nội, HCM City at the end of 2020 and then consecutively expanded to other cities. The 5G network was commercially tested by three operators, Viettel, VNPT and MobiFone, in 16 provinces and cities by the end of last year. Nguyễn Hoa Cường, vice president of the Central Institute of Economic Management (CIEM),



said that about 70 countries around the world had commercialised 5G. Besides being a technological innovation on its own, 5G was the enabler for many other technologies, he added. Việt Nam is aspiring to develop a digital government, digital economy and digital society, and 5G is expected to play a fundamental role by enhancing broadband connection, improving rural coverage, creating conditions to narrow the digital divide, developing Industry 4.0 and increasing the contribution of the digital media sector to Việt Nam's GDP. An important component of Việt Nam's socio-economic development strategy is the development of the digital economy, which is expected to contribute 7 per cent of GDP by 2025 and 7.5 per cent by 2030.

The Ministry of Information and Communications has set a goal to officially license 5G commercialisation this year and soon cover high-tech industrial parks. The information and communication industry is determined to bring Việt Nam along as a leading country in 5G. The Ministry of Information and Communications is currently in the final preparation steps to officially license 5G network operators this year. However, for the successful commercialisation of 5G, problems still need to be solved. To commercialise 5G faster, Việt Nam needs sufficient bandwidth, ripe 5G technology, diversified 5G services, and numerous cheap terminal equipment. Investment in 5G infrastructure is also a matter of concern. In the context of rising investment costs and declining telecommunications revenue, 5G investment is not simple. According to experts, tightening spending and investing in the common use of infrastructure and networks are key solutions for network operators to implement in Việt Nam successfully. This is just one of many solutions to the problem. Reducing investment costs also lies in choosing technology, using foreign equipment or self-manufacturing, and optimising markets and human resources costs. These will be issues that network operators need to calculate more carefully in the near future.

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 04/06/2022*

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## **Việt Nam's e-Learning Market Projected to Hit US\$3 Billion by 2023**

Việt Nam's e-learning market is expected to reach revenue of around US\$3 billion by 2023 with a compound annual growth rate of about 20.2 per cent from 2019-23, according to a report by Ken Research. Việt Nam's educational technology (Edtech) market is said to hold high potential and is drawing attention from investors, especially in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak and its complicated developments. Việt Nam was listed in the top 10 fastest growing Edtech markets globally, posting annual growth of 44.3 per cent, according to the Việt Nam Edtech Report 2021. Last year, Việt Nam moved from a "pandemic response education" status to "pandemic adaption education" amid the complicated developments of COVID-19. According to observers, in 2022, Edtech will be the pioneer technology when the demand for technology platforms in education rises. Phạm Hồng Quát, director of the Department of Market Development and Science and Technology

Enterprises under the Ministry of Science and Technology, said Việt Nam needed to promote "open innovation" to attract more resources in order to further promote the start-up innovation ecosystem and Edtech field. He said he also hoped that universities would become more "open", focusing on implementing cooperation agreements with foreign universities towards meeting the needs of businesses in the future.

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 04/13/2022*

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## **Việt Nam Starts e-Invoice Programme Nationwide**

Electronic invoices, or e-invoices, play a vital role in creating a transparent and fair business environment, a more streamlined administrative process, higher productivity, and are an integral part of Việt Nam's national strategy for digitalisation. Minister of Finance Hồ Đức Phúc made the statement during an event in Hà Nội held to start a nationwide e-invoice programme. With the introduction of an info portal for taxpayers outside of Việt Nam and the EtaxMobile app, the country's tax authority has significantly improved its ability to oversee and manage online commercial activities and tax procedures. Taxpayers now have been granted access to easier ways to proceed with their tax applications using mobile platforms. "The new apps have played an important role in convincing businesses to switch to using e-invoices. It was our conclusion after a short but successful pilot e-invoice programme," said the minister. Speaking at the event, Prime Minister Phạm Minh Chính said digitalisation is the next step in Việt Nam's national development strategy, in line with the global movement.

The PM said tax reform remains a key objective for the Government and the tax authorities can count on the Government's support for modernisation. Chính said the ministry's e-invoices are to have a profound impact on the transparency and effectiveness of the country's tax regime, while helping cut costs and improve the business environment. He urged the ministry and the general department to help raise awareness of the benefits of using e-invoices and provide additional support for small- and medium-sized and household businesses to make the transition. According to the General Department of Taxation, all businesses included in the pilot programme have moved to use e-invoices. The department said the next phase of the programme will be implemented on an even larger scale covering all localities across the country. Cao Anh Tuấn, head of the general department, said the department has set a goal to help all businesses move to e-invoices by the end of June. In the meantime, the general department will continue to improve its technology and infrastructure to ensure uninterrupted operations.

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 04/22/2022*

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## **Work on Social Housing Project Begins in Hà Nam**

The Housing and Urban Development Corporation has begun construction of a social housing project in the northern province of Hà Nam. Spanning 4.9ha in Duy Tiên Town, the project comprises four blocks with 564 apartments and some low-rise houses. The project's apartments will cost at least VNĐ380 million (around US\$16,300) each. During the project's ground-breaking ceremony last week, Minister of Construction Nguyễn Thanh Nghị said the State has always paid attention to developing affordable housing projects in order to address the housing needs of the social assistance beneficiaries and low-income earners. Chairman of the provincial People's Committee Trương Quốc Huy said the project will better meet the needs for affordable apartments of employees working in Duy Tiên Town and Hà Nam Province as well. The country needed an estimated VNĐ220 trillion (\$9.6 billion) to build about 294,600 units of social housing for low-income earners in urban areas and industrial parks in the 2021-25 period, according to the Ministry of Construction. Notably, low-income people in urban areas needs about 131,100 units with a total investment of about VNĐ138 trillion. There are 266 social housing projects with more than 142,000 units across the country, totalling more than 7.1 million sq.m. Another 278 projects with 274,000 units and a total area of 13.8 million sq.m are under development.

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 04/25/2022*

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## **Action Month for Children 2022 to Combat Child Abuse, Raise Awareness**

Action Month for Children 2022 will call for more efforts in child protection and child abuse prevention, the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MoLISA) has announced. The activities take place annually every June, to enhance the sense of responsibility among sectors and organisations in child protection and to ensure a safe summer for kids. In the framework of the action month, a launch ceremony is slated for May 27 to June 1, together with an event responding to the World Day Against Child Labour on June 12. The People's Committees of localities nationwide are asked to build plans for activities for the action month suitable to their conditions and to raise awareness and skills in child protection. Measures to fight sexual abuse and violence against children, offering shelter to children and an emergency helpline (111) for child protection, must be popularised. Localities are also required to regularly check so as to detect high-risk locations prone to child-related accidents and to call on organisations and individuals to support victims of abuse. According to the MoLISA's report, in 2021, the Ministry of Public Security detected 1,914 child abuse cases nationwide, an annual decrease of 31 cases. However, a number of severe cases that outraged the public took place. Meanwhile, child protection, particularly against domestic violence, had yet to receive adequate attention. A report by the helpline said children abused by their relatives accounted for the lion's share of the total cases last year, at 72.84 per cent, which represented an annual increase

of 5.3 per cent.

From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 04/28/2022

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## South Asia

### **Bangladesh and Sri Lanka Explore New Investments and Blue Economy Potential**

High Commissioner Professor Sudharshan Seneviratne drew home the importance of the tremendous potential both countries hold to work jointly towards a win-win situation on multiple areas of investments and be joint stakeholders in the blue economy having a shared interest in the Bay of Bengal. These ideas were discussed at a meeting held with the President of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI) Rizwan Rahman on 5th April 2022 at the DCCI office in Dhaka. High Commissioner Seneviratne and DCCI President Rizwan held discussions on a wide range of initiatives and explored the possibilities for Bangladesh to invest in Sri Lanka in tourism, agriculture, shipping and logistical sectors in addition to pharma and education in Sri Lanka. DCCI President Rizwan stated that Sri Lanka could be an attractive destination for Bangladesh investors and expressed DCCI's readiness to support the High Commission in its economic promotional activities. He also agreed to organize a business delegation to Sri Lanka at a convenient time this year. First Secretary (Commercial) of the High Commission Srimali Jayarathna participated in the discussion.

From <https://www.lankabusinessonline.com> 04/19/2022

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### **INDIA: 30 Odisha Villages Included in Digital Village Pilot Project**

As many as 30 villages in Odisha have been included in Centre's pilot digital village project. The digital village project aims to create one stop service solution in villages, providing them with like telemedicine, financial services, internet connectivity and other G2C/B2C services which are easily accessible at an affordable price round the year. To digitally empower the citizens free access to internet would be provided for at least five hours a day in the 30 villages. According to reports, a total outlay of 98.32 crore has been allocated for implementation of Digital Village Pilot project. Around 3 crore will be utilised for the implementation of the project in 30 villages of Odisha. The project aims to support techno economic viability of digital technology, projects for productive applications in village area livelihoods; standardise the technology packages for future applications; create awareness and capacity building activities on Information Technology systems. Creation of employment opportunities for the youth, by promoting the IT/ITES Industry. Promotion of investment in IT/ITES Sector in order to expand the base of IT Industry and secure balanced regional growth.

## **CyberArk Report: Massive Growth of Digital Identities Is Driving Rise in Cybersecurity Debt**

A new global report released today by CyberArk shows that 79% of senior security professionals state that cybersecurity has taken a back seat in the last year in favor of accelerating other digital business initiatives. The CyberArk 2022 Identity Security Threat Landscape Report identifies how the rise of human and machine identities – often running into the hundreds of thousands per organization – has driven a buildup of identity-related cybersecurity “debt”, exposing organizations to greater cybersecurity risk. Every major IT or digital initiative results in increasing interactions between people, applications and processes, creating large numbers of digital identities. If these digital identities go unmanaged and unsecured, they can represent significant cybersecurity risk: Sixty-eight percent of non-humans or bots have access to sensitive data and assets. The average staff member has greater than 30 digital identities.<sup>1</sup> Machine identities now outweigh human identities by a factor of 45x on average. Eighty-seven percent store secrets in multiple places across DevOps environments, while 80% say developers typically have more privileges than necessary for their roles. Secular trends of digital transformation, cloud migration and attacker innovation are expanding the attack surface. The report delves into the prevalence and type of cyber threats facing security teams and areas where they see elevated risk: Credential access was the number one area of risk for respondents (at 40%), followed by defense evasion (31%), execution (31%), initial access (29%) and privilege escalation (27%). Over 70% of the organizations surveyed have experienced ransomware attacks in the past year: two each on average. Sixty-two percent have done nothing to secure their software supply chain post the SolarWinds attack and most (64%) admit a compromise of a software supplier would mean an attack on their organization could not be stopped.

Security professionals agree that recent organization-wide digital initiatives have come at a price. This price is Cybersecurity Debt: security programs and tools that have grown but not kept pace with what organizations have put in place to drive operations and support growth. This debt has arisen through not properly managing and securing access to sensitive data and assets, and a lack of Identity Security controls is driving up risk and creating consequences. The debt is compounded by the recent rise in geopolitical tensions, which have already had direct impact on critical infrastructure, highlighting the need for heightened awareness of the physical consequences of cyber-attacks: Seventy-nine percent agree that their organization prioritized maintaining business operations over ensuring robust cyber security in the last 12 months. Less than half (48%) have Identity Security controls in place for their business-critical applications. Udi Mokady, founder, chairman and CEO, CyberArk: “The past few years have seen spending on digital transformation projects skyrocket

to meet the demands of changed customer and workforce requirements. The combination of an expanding attack surface, rising numbers of identities, and behind-the-curve investment in cybersecurity - what we call Cybersecurity Debt - is exposing organizations to even greater risk, which is already elevated by ransomware threats and vulnerabilities across the software supply chain. This threat environment requires a security-first approach to protecting identities, one capable of outpacing attacker innovation.” Rohan Vaidya, Regional Director of Sales – India, CyberArk said, “Digital transformation is undoubtedly breaking down the traditional barriers that used to prevent organisations from remaining competitive and agile within a rapidly evolving business landscape. This, however, comes with an exponential increase in cyber risks. Organisations in India should eliminate these risks by adopting an identity-focused strategy that will secure access for all identities across any application or system from anywhere via any device.”

Push for Transparency: 85% say that a Software Bill of Materials would reduce the risk of compromise stemming from the software supply chain. Introduce Strategies to Manage Sensitive Access: The top three measures that most CIOs and CISOs questioned in the survey have introduced (or plan to introduce), each cited by 54% of respondents: real-time monitoring and analysis to audit all privileged session activity; least privilege security / Zero Trust principles on infrastructure that runs business-critical applications; and processes to isolate business-critical applications from internet-connected devices to restrict lateral movement. Prioritize Identity Security Controls to Enforce Zero Trust Principles: The top three strategic initiatives to reinforce Zero Trust principles are: workload security; Identity Security tools; and data security.

From <https://news.siliconindia.com> 04/13/2022

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## **E-Autos to Soon Ply on Delhi Roads**

In an effort to provide impetus to the shift to electric vehicles, the Government of Delhi government, on February 14, has shortlisted applicants for the allotment of electric auto-rickshaws through a computerised draw of lots. A letter of intent is to be shared with all the successful applicants by the government by the end of the month. As per the official statement, women drivers will drive the lilac-coloured e-autorickshaws while men will drive blue e-autos. In a decision on February 11, the Supreme Court gave a green signal to the Delhi government to resume the registration of 4261 e-autos to be operated in the city. In October 2021, the Transport Department of Delhi rolled out the scheme for registration of 4261 e-autos, of which 33 per cent will be exclusively reserved for women drivers. In a month's time, the government received 20,589 applications. Of these, 2,855 male applicants were selected through a single common computerised draw of lots on February 14. The draw was held under the supervision of a committee comprising senior officials of the Transport Department and a special invitee from the Department of Women and

Child Development. The list of the applicants both successful and waitlisted has been uploaded on the Transport Department's website. Further, 743 female applicants, of the 1,406 e-auto rickshaws reserved for women, will be eligible for the scheme. The government will issue the respective LOIs subject to removal of deficiency in some cases where applications are found deficient on certain accounts. The Delhi government has decided to invite fresh applications for the balance 663 e-autos reserved for women and hold a special draw of lots. However, if the remaining slots remain un-allotted, the LOI for these e-autos will be allotted to the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) with the permission to operate these e-autos through an aggregator/operator. The aggregators will be operating these vehicles with a further condition that these shall be driven by only women. According to Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot, despite the colour differentiation, strict enforcement would be put in place once these autos start plying on the city streets to make sure that the benefits given to women drivers do not get misused by male drivers.

From <https://smartcity.eletsonline.com> 04/14/2022

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## **Integrated Command Centres in All 100 Smart Cities by August 15**

The government will reportedly set up Integrated Command Centres in all 100 smart cities by August 15 this year. Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Monday said that work has already started in almost all government-funded projects under the Smart City Mission. The projects will be complete by next year, he said. He further added that 80 out of the 100 Smart Cities in the country have Integrated Command and Control Centres and the work in the remaining 20 cities will be completed by August 15, 2022. The Smart Cities Mission was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in June 2015. It aims to facilitate cities with core infrastructure, clean and sustainable environment and a decent quality of life to their citizens through the application of Smart Solutions. The mission, which is a centrally sponsored scheme, will provide financial support of Rs 48000 crores over five years i.e. on an average Rs 100 crores per city per year. Since its launch, a total of Rs 27,234 crores have been released by the government to 100 cities.

From <https://smartcity.eletsonline.com> 04/19/2022

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## **Delhi Govt Makes 425 of 456 Citizens Services Online**

The Chief Secretary of Delhi Vijay Dev informed the Lieutenant Governor (L-G) of Delhi Anil Bajjal on the digitalisation of 425 citizen services, 93 per cent of the 456 services identified, senior government officials said. As per a national daily, cent per cent digitalisation of citizen services will be completed by August, a year ahead of the deadline, the CS added during a review meeting chaired by the L-G. Before the lockdowns were imposed, in May 2020, there were only 122 services available online



for citizens. The pandemic-led lockdown provided an impetus to digitise more services to aid people in times of crisis and prevent crowding at government offices. As per the government data, there are a few services offered by the directorate of employment and the drugs control department that are yet to be digitised and linked to the e-district portal. However, L-G has been given assurance to have those covered by month-end. However, almost all departments integrated their citizen services with the e-district portal.

From <https://smartcity.eletsonline.com> 04/24/2022

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## **DDA Digitises 1,500 Layout Plans in Delhi**

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has digitised 1,500 layout plans in the national capital under the digital transformational plan. The agency said in a statement, "The digitised layout plan covers planned areas in Delhi and will be available on a GIS platform for use by general public." DDA's land pooling portal for registration of public is operational. The authority has digitised various maps of land pooling area and made them available on the portal. "Servers from NIC have been taken for this purpose, and the land pooling programme will be operational end-to-end very soon," the agency said. It further stated that a total of 6,922 landowners have registered online to show their interest in land pooling. Moreover, computerised record rooms have been constructed in the DDA office for systematic record management.

From <https://smartcity.eletsonline.com> 04/25/2022

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## **Digitisation Transforming Nagpur**

With the rising adoption of digital tools in reshaping the urban development in India, smart cities like Nagpur are highly leveraging technology interventions like automation, AI-based cameras, and more to transform the overall liveability of the city. On this note, Dr. Sheel Ghule, General Manager, E-Governance & Nodal Officer, Nagpur Smart City addressed the Digital Governance Summit, Maharashtra Edition. In Nagpur, we are implementing the Integrated Traffic Management System (ITMS). Also, we have the Automatic Traffic Control System (ATCS) which automatically controls the traffic signals based on the traffic density. The system controls traffic signals by assessing the density of traffic at a particular traffic junction. In case there is no movement detected on one side, the signal turns red and for the other side, it automatically turns green allowing free movement of the traffic. This not only reduces the average time for a citizen to wait at the signal but also saves fuel. The ATCS has been implemented as a pilot project at a few junctions, but to get the desired outcome we have to implement it across the city. The pilot approach at times poses a challenge as the traffic flow from other signals affects the movement at these junctions. Coming from a software engineering background and being a part of the



Nagpur Police's Bharosa Cell for Women, I am developing a mobile app for women in distress that will soon be launched. A woman in distress can use this mobile app to raise an alert. With just a double click on the virtual panic button in the app, an alert will automatically be sent to the nearest Bharosa Cell Control Room with her geographical location. Also, the app would provide directions to the police with the shortest route to the source of the alert. As of now, the app is in the final stage of development.

Nagpur Smart City has started using QR codes to ensure the proper delivery of door-to-door citizen services. This has enabled the authority to keep a check if the municipal vehicles are reaching out to the citizens. Sometimes, it is seen that the citizens complain about garbage collection vehicles not providing the service daily. On the other hand, there have been incidences when the collection vehicles get no response from the people or the doors were found to be locked. Therefore, the QR codes play a crucial role to keep a check on both the staff and the citizens establishing the fact if the collection was done or not. To enhance surveillance and improve security across the city, we have installed CCTV cameras that play a key role to help police departments to investigate crime. These Smart AI-enabled cameras detect unidentified objects, mishaps, accidents, etc. and raise alerts to the police. In my opinion, every smart city in the country including Nagpur should work on adopting technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) to make our assets smart. In addition to this, we are working on smart toilets. Regarding this, we have been specific about our requirements in the tender documents that include a real-time dashboard to display the number of users using it every hour. Further, after every hour the vendor should clean the toilet and if the flush gets defunct there should be additional provisions to flush the toilet. In case these toilets are not cleaned timely, an alert should automatically go to the vendor and the municipal corporation or the respective nodal officer. This will ensure that besides being smart, the toilet is clean any time a person needs to use it.

From <https://egov.eletsonline.com> 04/25/2022

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## **Gadkari Inaugurates 7 NH Projects Worth ₹5,569 Crore in Maharashtra**

Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari today inaugurated seven National Highway Projects costing Rs 5569 crores in Aurangabad district, which is one of Maharashtra's main industrial and educational centres. "The development of tourism centres in Aurangabad, which is a key tourist attraction in Maharashtra, is dependent on city road transportation," the minister said. He further said that the growth of Aurangabad district, as well as transportation, would gain momentum by the building of these national highway projects. Moreover, the projects will help improve the city's traffic, minimising accidents and pollution in the district. The highways will also connect rural parts to the city. The government has

undertaken initiatives to address the water issue in Aurangabad area through road developments. Gadkari said that many ponds have been built along the lines of the Buldhana pattern, and mud and stones have been employed in the construction of roadways, according to him.

From <https://smartcity.eletsonline.com> 04/25/2022

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## **India's Internet Scene: Today & Tomorrow**

Digitalisation is reshaping the future of governance and access to the internet lays the foundation for this transformation. Sharing his insights on India's internet scenario and the future roadmap, Anil Kumar Jain, CEO, National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI) interacted with Nisha Samant of Elets News Network (ENN). What role does NIXI play in bolstering the Government's IT infrastructure contributing towards making India AatmaNirbhar? NIXI – the National Internet Exchange of India – is a not-for-profit organisation, working since 2003 with a mission to make the internet accessible to the citizens of India. We were the first to set up Internet Exchanges across the country, through which internet data is exchanged among ISPs and CDNs to ensure that the data gets routed locally instead of travelling out of the country, which would increase costs and latency and put citizen's data at risk. We also established in registry, which gave millions of Indians a unique, global identity through in and domains as well as we maintain NIR registry IRINN, which manages the allocation of Internet protocol Resources. (IPv4/IPv6). India is going through the most significant phase of its digital revolution right now. A larger portion of the country has adopted digital payments and is fine with making video calls. Considering the new normal, educational institutions are shifting education to the internet. Beyond the mainstream, people are looking at other alternatives to conventional means of life. NIXI brings together ISPs, CDNs and other organisations on the same network facilitating the exchange of domestic Internet traffic thus improving the quality of the internet, making it more resilient, faster, and cheaper. It also enables efficient use of international bandwidth, saving foreign exchange. Since December 2012, NIXI was also given the responsibility to manage National Internet Registry to delegate Internet Protocol Addresses (IPv4 and IPv6) and Autonomous System Numbers to its affiliates. NIXI is also authorised by the Government of India to sell and manage . in and domains and has been instrumental in popularising the .in domain and has been working tirelessly to make the internet more inclusive by bringing out IDNs in 22 official Indian languages.

Though we have rapidly adopted digital modes, especially during the COVID times, a major sect of the population is still deprived of internet connectivity. How are you bridging this gap? The objective of opening Internet Exchange Points (IXPs) is to lower the cost of broadband internet for Internet Service Providers (ISPs) by providing the content available in the metros right at the doorstep of these ISPs located in Tier2 and Tier3 cities. This enables ISPs to pass on the cost-benefit to

their end- users making cheaper, faster and reliable internet in these cities a reality. We hope that Internet Exchange helps to expand internet reach and will make the internet more affordable for those who right now are not able to have a broadband connection. On the previous Republic Day, NIXI offered free domains to people in 22 local languages. How this move does benefit the citizens? Further, what steps are you taking to remove the language barriers for internet users? Organisations and individuals were able to create a digital identity for themselves or their businesses by creating their own websites and establishing their own digital footprint, with this NIXI strongly upholds the vision of the Indian Government to be self-reliant and promote the homegrown brands and services. Ensuring that language does not become a barrier in utilising technology is key for digital inclusion and growth. Offering free domain registrations with free email addresses in regional languages was NIXI's contribution to making modern communication tools accessible and easier for all.

What measure NIXI is taking to ensure Safe and Secure Internet connectivity to the governments and the citizens across the country? India, with more than 1.4 billion citizens, 1.2 billion mobile users, and 800 million Internet users, demonstrates the growing Internet culture in the country. E-Governance and Cyber Security become of paramount importance in such a scenario. The Government took the initiative of starting the Indian chapter of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) which facilitates the discussions between intergovernmental organisations, private companies, technical community, academic community and civil society organisations that are involved in Internet governance-related public policy issues to make internet inclusive, safe and secure. Source:

<https://myvoice.opindia.com/2017/04/150000-villages-in-india-to-have-internet-conn-ectivity-is-it-finally-time-for-rural-startups/>

This policy dialogue is carried out on a co-equal basis through open and inclusive processes. This mode of engagement is referred to as the multistakeholder model of Internet Governance, which has been one of the key reasons for the Internet's success. NIXI through IRINN has been working tirelessly to promote Route Origin Authorisation which is cryptographic. Digitally signed object that tells us which Autonomous Numbers (ASN) is authorised to originate a particular IP address prefix or set of a prefix. This prevents hacking of the network by preventing route hijacking. The percentage of IP prefixes that had enabled ROA in September 2020 was 12 per cent which currently stands at 58 per cent. These efforts are likely to enable a more secure internet ecosystem in the country. What is the roadmap of NIXI in the near future? NIXI's mission is to be the leader in internet facilitation and provide citizens of the country with an inclusive, affordable, safe and secure internet environment in the country. With both businesses and consumers preferring regional flavours of the internet, India is growing its economy by promoting local businesses and aligning themselves with the clarion call by our Prime Minister of being "AatmaNirbhar". In order to capture the regional customer, it is imperative that businesses localise their content in Indian languages. NIXI is enabling this by promoting IDNs in 22 different regional languages and giving free emails to enable citizens who only speak these

regional languages.

From <https://egov.eletsonline.com> 04/25/2022

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## **UP Spearheading the Self-Reliant India Vision**

Modern technology has advanced at a breakneck pace, from the earliest usage of simple tools to high-tech machines. With this, the technology also plays a crucial role in driving the Government of India's vision of AatmaNirbhar Bharat, writes Kumar Vineet, Special Secretary IT & Managing Director, Uttar Pradesh Development Systems Corporation Ltd. (UPDESCO). India has, time and again, proven its ability to overcome obstacles and seize possibilities. To make India a self-reliant nation and fulfill the dream of achieving a \$5 trillion economy, Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave a clarion call highlighting the Government's vision of building an AatmaNirbhar Bharat. The vision has been greatly admired and has inspired many. The current era, however, is the era of the digital revolution. If India wants to achieve true self-reliance in all fields, it must begin with the fabrication of digitalisation. Owing to the COVID-induced lockdowns, daily life has been disturbed and social interaction has been restricted. As a result, millions of people are meeting and connecting online. Families and friends are increasingly keeping up with each other and socialising digitally. Educators, health clubs, and other organisations are offering programs online. Even businesses are using video conferencing platforms for their daily communication. It has been a life-changing moment for people around the world, which we have gradually adjusted to and are attempting to fully adopt the new normal. AatmaNirbhar Bharat aims for inclusive growth in the areas of electronic services, job opportunities, products, and manufacturing. It is the vision of our Prime Minister to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy.

The primary motto of Digital India's mission is "Power to Empower". Aligning with the Digital India vision of the Government of India, the Government of Uttar Pradesh has recorded quantum leaps in governance and service delivery with the introduction of a single-window platform for all the citizen-centric government services under the e-District. Over 1,50,000 CSCs are delivering Government-to-Consumer (G2C)/ Business-to-Customer (B2C) services to citizens. Ushering digital transparency in the procurement process, the path-breaking initiative of e-tendering has been implemented across all the government departments. The three core components of the Digital India Mission include; the creation of the digital infrastructure, digital literacy, and digitising services. The core objectives of the Digital India Mission with regard to the AatmaNirbhar Bharat vision are as follows:

1. Digital India aims to combine a large number of ideas and thoughts into a single and comprehensive vision to make them a part of a larger goal that is to make India self-reliant.
2. To provide high-speed internet in all the Gram Panchayats.

3. To provide easy access to the common service centres in all the localities.
4. To reconstruct all the existing schemes to implement them in a synchronised manner.

Uttar Pradesh, the State with the largest number of engineering graduates empowered in the field of IT, Electronics & Communication has approximately 36 universities, 3104 colleges, 1500 ITIs, 197 B-Schools and 320 engineering colleges and is home to many premier institutions such as IIT, IIM, IIIT, and BHU. The current policy initiative reflects the determination of the State government in making Uttar Pradesh an Electronics & IT Manufacturing Hub. Some of the noteworthy initiatives from the UP government are: E-tendering: The process of procurement has been made entirely transparent through the implementation of e-tendering across all departments. This reform ushers in fairness, accountability and healthy competition for government and private players. Citizen Service Delivery: Provision of e-services is being made through the internet and Common Service Delivery outlets such as Jan Seva Kendra, Lokvani, e-Suvidha, etc. E-office: E-Office is being implemented across the state departments for improving the operational efficiency, reducing the turnaround time enhancing transparency and accountability of the state departments. M-governance: Government shall promote m-governance across government services through building mobile-based applications and citizen services. Various mobile applications such as m-Sehat, m-Swasthya, UPOne, UP-BUS, etc. have been developed and implemented by the state departments.

Digital Payments: The Government of India promotes digital payment options, which is an integral part of the Government's strategy to transform India into a cashless economy. Uttar Pradesh plans to undertake tremendous reforms, including IT readiness, payment infrastructure and capacity building to achieve the state's digital payment target of Rs 312 crore transactions. Following are the government services that are introduced under the Digital India Initiative: 1. Policy – Cyber Security Policy (in the making), UP IT & Start-UP Policy, Condemnation Guidelines, UP Electronics Manufacturing Policy, UP Data Centre Policy. 2. Technological Interventions – IoT, Chatbot, Artificial Intelligence (AI)/ Machine Learning (ML). 3. CM Helpline – Citizens grievances at their doorstep with a "Single Toll-free Contact Number 1076" 4. Digilocker is another initiative launched under the Digital India Programme aiming to eliminate the usage of physical documents and enable sharing of e-documents. 5. UMANG is a mobile application that is home to numerous government services for all citizens. 6. Common Service Center 3.0 – Two DSPs in each district (1.5 lakh CSC centres are established) and a special focus under Mission Shakti for Women VLE. 7. E-District State Portal – e-District UP intends to provide government services through Citizen Service Centers (CSC) to minimise effort and time to provide prompt effective services to the public 260+ G2C Services of departments available on the e-District Portal. 8. Health Department Initiatives. Covid Bed Availability, Mera COVID Kendra App, COVID sample collection centres.

COVID Lab Report/Result, Telemedicine (e-Sanjivani and Arogya Setu), COVID Vaccination, CSC Centres for registration of vaccination in the rural areas registration. Uttar Pradesh was the first state to administer 17 crore COVID vaccination shots. 9. Technology Playing Big Role in Streamlining Mining Activity. The Geology and Mining Department has decided to use technology in a big way to keep a tab on illegal mining in various districts of the state. Therefore, an AI-based Integrated Mining Surveillance System (IMSS) has been established by the Directorate of Geology and Mining to streamline the mining activity in the state. It is being integrated with all mines in the state from where all mines will be monitored using PTZ/CCTV cameras and drones by AI-based software. We are ensuring that all the mines have installed PTZ cameras equipped with night vision capabilities and weighbridges linked with the Unified Revenue Command Centre. During the pandemic, technology has proven to be a game-changer. Despite not being able to go outdoors, people all across the world have made great use of the lockdown period. They've pushed the boundaries of creativity and we want India to follow suit. In general, I am confident that if we take proactive steps to learn how to be self-sufficient through technology, we will be able to meet our PM's vision and serve as a role model for the rest of the world.

From <https://egov.eletsonline.com> 04/25/2022

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## **Kochi Metro Exemplifying Sustainable Mobility**

Smart, safe and sustainable mobility is one of the key focus areas to make India AatmaNirbhar. Kochi Metro is a mass transit system that has taken several initiatives to go sustainable. Elaborating on these initiatives, Lokanath Behera, Managing Director, Kochi Metro Rail Limited interacted with Nisha Samant of Elets News Network (ENN). Sustainable mobility has a key role to play in making India AatmaNirbhar. What's your take on this? How is Kochi Metro faring on this front? In my opinion, sustainable mobility is referred to transport systems compatible with human and environmental health. In this type of mobility, pollution should be minimal. Metro trains, which are mass transport systems, are sustainable as they operate on electricity and emit no fumes or smoke. Moreover, in Kochi Metro, the entire system from tracks to electrification is 'Indian'. Today, of the required 20 MW of electricity, we produce almost 11 MW of power through solar panels. Our target for the coming year is to achieve 100 per cent of our power requirements through solar. Therefore, we are contributing towards making India AatmaNirbhar. In the expansion programme of KMRL, the same principles and ethos shall be followed. For the First Mile & Last Mile connectivity, we have acquired 1000 bicycles and we are adding another 10,000 by the end of next year in a PPP model. Further, we have introduced electric buses and we will also be introducing Hydrogen Fuel Cell buses. Adding to that, the Water Metro, which is again a sustainable mobility system, will be integrated into the Metro Rail system. Our endeavour is to become 100 per cent AtmaNirbhar by using indigenous methods and technology.

Recently, Kochi Metro has floated tenders for hydrogen-propelled feeder buses. Shed some light on this distinctive initiative and what you're aiming to achieve? Kerala has always remained the lead-runner in adopting the latest technologies. As the Government of India has declared the National Hydrogen Mission, to my knowledge, ours is the first State planning to induct Hydrogen-propelled buses and install Hydrogen fuelling facilities on a commercial basis. Considering the technical dispositions of KMRL and its efficiency in managing modern transport systems, the Government of Kerala has entrusted KMRL with running 10 Hydrogen buses initially. In this regard, funds have also been allotted. If everything goes right, we may be the first State to induct Hydrogen vehicles on a commercial basis. Initially, we will run them as feeder services to the metro. Subsequently, it can go for long trips, as to be decided by the Government. We are also exploring the possibility of Hydrogen-powered Water Metro boats. Kochi Metro has been lauded for improving multi-modal connectivity in the city, especially through its Water Metro project to connect the surrounding islands. Elaborate on this initiative. In times to come, how can the connectivity be further improved? Can a project like Mumbai's sea-link be an alternative? Kochi is a unique city having efficient Road, Rail, Metro and Water Transport. But the integration, as we see in western countries, is yet to be done. Water Metro is one of the most uniquely conceived and designed projects. The Water Metro Project is of Rs 819 crore and will have a network of 15 routes that span 76 km. A fleet of 78 fast, electrically propelled hybrid ferries ply on these routes from 38 jetties operated by Kochi Water Metro Limited (KWML).

Kochi has become India's first city to have a Water Metro Project after the launch of its first boat in December 2021, named 'Muziris,' among the 23 battery-powered electric boats being manufactured by Cochin Shipyard Limited. Integrating the sea, road, and rail with a multimodal transport system into a single platform will be one of the major achievements. A Sea-Link similar to that in Mumbai is already there in Kochi known as the Goshree Project. It connects various important islands. Of course, if the Water Metro system operates more efficiently, which we expect, there will not be a requirement to construct more extensive bridges. Moreover, water transport is sustainable, green and efficient. What were the major challenges that you faced while implementing the Water Metro project? The major challenge which we faced and continue to face, while implementing the Water Metro project, is getting environmental clearances, which we obtained after a lot of effort. The second challenge that still persists is procuring of Hybrid Boats. Such types of boats are not readily available anywhere in the world. They have to be manufactured, and it continues to be a challenge in integrating various technologies together. We are extremely proud that Cochin Shipyard Limited is constructing the state of the art 100-pax Hybrid Boats. The other problem was related to land acquisition. Acquiring land in the thickly populated islands of Kochi is extremely challenging. I expect there will be another challenge in getting a highly qualified, efficient, skilled crew to run the state of the art boats.

Considering the development of metros across the country and their huge contribution to improving mobility, especially in crowded cities like Delhi. Where do you see metro trains in the future of public transport in India? In 2015, Metro was 250 km in the overall country, whereas now almost 750 km is operational. Metro is the needed urban transport and after 25 years from today, when 100 years of independence will be completed, then the metro will probably achieve expansion in at least 100 cities of the country extending the network up to 5,000 km. There will be a paradigm shift in public transport with a lot of advancement in technology, innovation & digital transformation and metros will be the preferred choice of transportation for people. Metro Neo & the Light Metro are getting more prominence currently due to the low cost. There will be a huge demand to connect cities and states with metro stations. I also foresee that metros will connect nearby towns to the cities in the coming future, and also hope technologies like Driverless Metro and Hydrogen-propelled Metro will come up quicker than expected.

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## **Taking Digitisation to the Grassroots**

The COVID pandemic surfaced the need for India to be AatmaNirbhar in order to tackle gear up for future uncertainties. Highlighting how Chhotaudepur district tackled the COVID crisis and bounced back, Stuti Charan, Collector, Chhotaudepur, Gujarat interacted with Hemangini Kanth Rajput of Elets News Network (ENN). What initiatives were undertaken by the district administration to tackle challenges during the pandemic? There were numerous challenges that we faced in Chhotaudepur owing to the infamous COVID pandemic. During that period, despite being in troubled waters, we have optimised our health and human resources to cope with the challenges. Measures like increasing the bed availability from 800 to 1437 special paediatric wards with ICU beds and augmentation of other healthcare facilities were taken to aid people in the district. Combined and coordinated efforts cutting across various departments helped us to become better prepared for the next wave of the pandemic. During the third wave, we equipped our healthcare facilities with seven PSA plants having the capacity of 100 to 500 LPM, including 13 MT LMO at the district hospital which approximately created 18 MT oxygen. We had the support of Aasha workers/ Aanganvadi workers, the health team, other district officials, public representatives, and teachers who had worked day and night with dedication. Moreover, due to strong surveillance, tracing, tracking and monitoring, we were able to cope with cases and ensured zero deaths during the third wave.

Also, we deployed 17 Dhanvantri Rath and delivered over 11,000 e-sanjeevani OPD/ telemedicine services to the patients suffering psychological stress, and depression in COVID complication cases. We have ensured a sufficient supply of RT-PCR testing kits, masks and sanitisers. Ayurvedic/Homeopathy medicines distribution was



done by the concerned department. Also, the significance of adopting Yoga to improve the immunity of the people including the COVID patients was promoted. Following PM Narendra Modi's clarion call for AatmaNirbhar Bharat, the Gujarat Government is taking various initiatives like AtmaNirbhar Gujarat Sahay Yojana. How these initiatives are helping Chhotaudepur to become self-reliant? AatmaNirbhar Bharat Abhiyan and the guiding principles of AatmNirbhar Gujarat Sahay Yojana are very promising. These will infuse new zeal in various sectors and the beneficiaries who had suffered during the pandemic. This initiative, at large, will help people from lower and middle-income groups. They can avail guarantee free loans up to Rs 1 lakh for three years from banks. The loan amount will be provided with an annual interest rate of 2 per cent. The Government will pay another 6 per cent interest to banks giving loans for this scheme. Any person, resident of the district, who wishes to start their own business can get this loan as a starting capital. Small businessmen, skilled workers, electricians, barbers, autorickshaw drivers, and any other person from lower or middle-income groups can avail of the benefits of this scheme. Women entrepreneurs are growing by the day so the district has also focused on improving their financial literacy which in turn will improve their economic status and self-confidence. Various training camps were organised to make them understand the basics of banking (withdrawal/ deposit) how to use ATM cards, write cheques, etc. Many progressive women farmers working in the area of dairy are now able to maintain financial records and ensure better market linkage for their products in supply chain management.

As we all understand the motto of self-reliance, the district team is equally ensuring its success at the grassroots level. Various stakeholders were provided training and exposure visits to industries for sector-specific workshops. AatmaNirbhar Bharat is a strong motivation that believes in being confident to be self-reliant and self-sustainable in all the segments of work. The concept and packages of economic support tremendously helped to improve, rethink, and move up the ladder swiftly. AtmaNirbhar Bharat is developing into a mass movement as well as the anchor for the policy framework. Considering this, what steps are undertaken by the district administration focusing on rural development? After assuming my post as District Magistrate of Chhotaudepur, a slew of initiatives like digitisation of public services, online redressal of public grievances through E-Jilla Swagat, E-Jansamvad, and more. The two portals have created an ecosystem for people living in the rural and tribal parts of the district to interact directly with the district administration. Such initiatives not only ease communication but also acts as a motivation for rural people to embrace technology more in their daily lives. Making them technologically aware is a crucial part of AatmaNirbhar Bharat and we are happy to showcase that technology could be used to solve even the homegrown issues of rural India. This was highly appreciated in state and national media. It also got a place in the best practices of the state compendium.

In one of its kind initiative in the state, the district administration facilitated

e-connectivity to gram panchayats. How digital transformation is supporting the mission to build a sustainable future and emerge as self-reliant? The dream of digital India is possible only when digitisation penetrates into the rural parts of the country. Our initiatives like E-Jilla Swagat and E-Jansamvad aid in creating an inclusive digital transformation cutting across the rural-urban divide in our district. These initiatives have not only paced up the grievance redressal and improved public service delivery but also must be viewed as starting steps in our vision to empower rural people and transition them to adopt digital technologies as part of their daily life routine.

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## **Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari Launches 12 National Highway & 7 CRIF Projects in Hyderabad**

Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari inaugurated 12 National Highway Projects of a total length of 460 km worth Rs 8000 crore and 7 Central Road Infrastructural Fund (CRIF) Projects in Hyderabad in the august presence of Union Minister for Tourism, Culture and Development of North East Regions G Kishan Reddy; Minister of State for Road Transport & Highways Gen V K Singh; Minister of Legislative Affairs and Housing of Telangana Vemula Prashanth Reddy; MPs; MLAs; MLCs and other dignitaries. The National Highway projects of a total length 460 km with an investment of Rs 8,000 crore will boost inter-state connectivity by enabling seamless travel from Telangana to Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh. The fast-paced highway development will boost trade and commerce in the region and create sustainable employment opportunities for the youth. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the network of state-of-the-art and safe National Highways built will have a transformational impact on the socio-economic prosperity of the people in Hyderabad and Telangana.

From <https://smartcity.eletsonline.com> 04/29/2022

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## **SRI LANKA: ADB Forecasts Economic Growth to Dip to 2.4-pct in 2022**

The Asian Development Bank's (ADB) annual flagship economic publication forecasts a muted recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID19) pandemic as Sri Lanka's economy grapples with macroeconomic challenges arising from high debt, low foreign reserves, and inflationary pressures. ADB forecasts Sri Lanka's economic growth to dip to 2.4% in 2022 and improve marginally to 2.5% in 2023. The Asian Development Outlook (ADO) 2022 observes that even as the Omicron variant of COVID-19 subsides, the country is facing several headwinds. Rising food, fuel and commodity prices, higher import prices, supply chain disruptions, shortages stemming from the foreign exchange squeeze, demand side pressures, and

exchange rate depreciation will drive inflation higher in 2022. Inflationary pressures are expected to moderate in 2023 as global prices fall and supply constraints ease. “A strong vaccination drive helped economic activity recover from the impact of multiple COVID-19 waves, with tourism, one of the worst hit sectors, gaining strength at the turn of the year,” said ADB Regional Economic Advisor for South Asia Rana Hasan. “At the same time, strong growth is being held back by Sri Lanka’s debt overhang, large external financing requirements, energy shortages, and high inflation. Immediate measures to restore macroeconomic stability and debt sustainability are crucial for recovery to gain traction.” Underlying macroeconomic weaknesses, the pandemic’s lingering impacts, energy shortages and external shocks pose downside risks to the economic outlook. In the absence of access to sustained balance of payment financing, foreign exchange reserves will continue to be limited, and external sector vulnerabilities are likely to persist. The implications of the Russian invasion of Ukraine will be seen through higher oil and food prices as well as reduced tourism and exports earnings.

From <https://www.lankabusinessonline.com> 04/06/2022

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## **Ready to Join Interim Government on Condition of Rebuilding Economy: SJB Tells Government**

Samagi Jana Balawege MP Eran Wickremaratne stated in Parliament today that if the Prime Minister agrees to the proposal to abolish the executive Presidency, as intimated in Parliament, the main opposition is ready to join an interim government at the invitation of the government and take up the responsibility of reviving the economy tomorrow. The Samagi Jana Balawewa not only criticizes the government but also wants to make positive proposals to the government. I would like to propose that no more than two members of the same family should be appointed to the Cabinet. Mr Eran Wickramaratne was speaking today on the two-day debate on the current situation in the country in Parliament. The MP further speaking on the second day of the debate today (07) further said that Prior to the discussion of the proposed interim government, action should be taken to eliminate distrust of the Government as this government has lost its credibility nationally and internationally. Mr. Wickremaratne urged that the Prime Minister, who applauded by knocking on his table when the Leader of the Opposition called for the abolition of the executive presidency, should submit a proposal immediately to get rid of the menace of executive President. The main problem of this government is the lack of trust in the government. If there is no international trust in the government for a financial or economic problem, that government will not be able to solve any issues that erupts in governance.

The Samagi Jana Balawega does not participate in all party conferences, but in Parliament, the SJB is ready to present solutions to the problems that have arisen in the country. When the President and the Prime Minister of the country do not have

the necessary knowledge of economics and finance, at least a Minister of Finance with knowledge of economics and finance should be appointed. “Moreover, there is no country in the world where three members of the same family have been appointed to the Cabinet. Therefore, the loss of confidence in this government is inevitable. We have a plan for the economy. We firmly believe that this plan will end the current era of queues in the country, ” said Wickremaratne. Corruption is one of the main reasons for the loss of confidence in this government. It has been reported in a British court that the relevant company in Britain has given money to SriLankan Airlines to buy an air bus. It was reported that two million dollars had been credited to the account of the wife of the then CEO of SriLankan Airlines. Central Bank of Sri Lanka in 2007 has paid \$ 6.5 million and the person called Zuberi who received this money is in jail now on a 12 year imprisonment. Jaliya Wickremasooriya, the then Sri Lankan Ambassador to US , has pleaded guilty in the US court for a fraud in 2013 for embezzling more than \$ 300,000 in the acquisition of a new building for the Sri Lankan Embassy in the United States.

Although any official accused of financial misconduct should be suspended under normal disciplinary procedures. Mahinda Rajapaksa's attempt to appoint Jaliya Wickramasuriya, a relative of the Rajapaksa family, as Sri Lanka's ambassador to Canada, was unsuccessful as the Canadian government rejected to accept a corrupt person as an envoy. Sri Lanka is also a signatory to the United Nations Anti-Corruption Charter, which contains a chapter on the recovery of assets accumulated through corruption. When the foreign courts punish Sri Lankans for corruptions and accumulation of wealth , in Sri Lanka,no inquiry or case has been filed against such persons . A Presidential Task Force on the Recovery of Assets accumulated from Corruption was appointed in 2018. The committee has drafted a bill for this purpose. Mr. Wickremaratne called on the government to present the anti-corruption bill to parliament and pass it into law.

From <https://www.lankabusinessonline.com> 04/08/2022

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## **How Is an Economic Crisis Affecting People?**

People across Sri Lanka are struggling to get hold of daily essentials as the country faces its worst economic crisis in decades. Sri Lanka is mired in public debt after revenue from tourism evaporated in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. With the country's foreign currency reserves dwindling and foreign debt payments around the corner, it can barely pay for imports of staple foods, fuel and medicines. The deepening debt emergency is touching nearly every facet of daily life in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna-led coalition government's decision to devalue the rupee while imposing strict limits on imports has pushed up prices of many key items. Authorities have imposed power cuts. Bakeries have shut down due to a lack of cooking gas. Education authorities recently called off exams indefinitely for school students in one province after printing paper ran out. A recent \$1bn credit line from

India to buy food and medicine – part of \$2.4bn in assistance from Sri Lanka's neighbour since January – has given President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's government a little breathing space. But Sri Lanka is still well short of the money needed to service about \$4bn in outstanding debt this year. It has only about \$2.3bn in its foreign currency reserves, and is now looking to China and the International Monetary Fund for additional help. A cabinet reshuffle by Rajapaksa has done little to placate critics, and he remains under pressure from protesters supported by the opposition United People's Force. Tens of thousands of people joined one demonstration in the capital Colombo, with many demanding that the president resign. In this episode of The Stream we'll look at the struggles people in Sri Lanka are facing, how the economic crisis risks undermining the country's stability, and what happens next.

From <https://www.lankabusinessonline.com> 04/11/2022

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## **NEPAL: ADB Forecasts Modest Economic Growth in FY2022**

Nepal's economy is anticipated to grow by 3.9% (at market prices) in fiscal year (FY) 2022 from an estimated 2.3% growth in FY2021, says the latest Asian Development Outlook (ADO) 2022, the flagship economic publication of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and its Macroeconomic Update. Growth is expected to rebound on the back of the ongoing vaccination campaign against the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic to control infections, fostering a gradual normalization in economic activity and a steady path to higher growth supported by accommodative macroeconomic policies. " However, slowing growth in advanced economies exacerbated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, along with disrupted trade flows and higher oil and other commodity prices, is expected to push inflation and may exert further pressure on Nepal's balance of payments and foreign exchange reserves," said ADB Country Director for Nepal Arnaud Cauchois.

Agriculture was previously expected to grow favorably as paddy plantation had been promising amid abundant rainfall during the 2021 summer monsoon. However, unexpected rains and floods in mid-October damaged ready-to-harvest crops, which shrank paddy output by about 9.0% this fiscal year. Industry growth is expected to edge up to 4.1% in FY2022 on increased consumer and investment demand. Services will likely grow by 5.2% as wholesale and retail trade, transport, and financial services have picked up. International tourism remained depressed in 2021 but will likely gradually recover if the COVID-19 situation remains under control. Inflation in FY2022 is forecast to average 6.5%, up from 3.6% in FY2021, reflecting the transmission of higher global oil prices and subsequent higher transportation costs. The recent uptick in petroleum and commodity prices, owing to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, has added further inflationary pressure. The current account deficit is expected to further widen to 9.7% in FY2022 from 8.0% of gross domestic product (GDP) in FY2021 due to increased import growth, a low export base, and subdued workers' remittances.

GDP growth at 5.0% is envisaged for FY2023 on the expectation that vaccination against COVID-19 will continue to progress, enabling further revival of economic activities that have gradually picked up since FY2021. Inflation is forecast to marginally decline to 6.2% in FY2023, reflecting a better harvest, smoother supply chain distribution, relatively subdued oil prices, and a modest decline in India's inflation. The current account deficit is expected to moderate to 6.1% of GDP in FY2023 as monetary policy is likely to be less expansionary, COVID-19-related imports will have substantially decreased, and increased hydroelectricity generation eases fossil fuel consumption. Downside risks to the outlook center on exogenous shocks such as emergence of strong, new coronavirus variants, intensification of the current global turmoil, and recurrence of calamities like floods, landslides, and earthquakes, which have devastated lives and livelihoods in the past.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 04/06/2022

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## Central-West Asia

### **AZERBAIJAN: Several Payment Systems to Withhold Commission from ATB Cards**

A commission fee of one percent will be withheld when replenishing the balance of Azer-Turk-Bank (ATB) debit cards via MilliON payment system's terminals in Azerbaijan from April 1, 2022, Ulviyya Afandiyeva, head of the customer care unit at MilliON, told Trend. According to Afandiyeva, the commission fee won't be withheld when paying for a loan or credit cards belonging to ATB through the MilliON terminals. Aishan Hasanova, eManat payment system marketing specialist, said that the same commission fee will also be charged when replenishing balance of ATB debit cards through eManat terminals. "No commission fee will be charged for payments on ATB loans and credit cards," Hasanova added. The press service of Azer-Turk-Bank confirmed that from April 1, the mentioned payment systems will charge the fee. All ATB cardholders can replenish the balance of their cards without charging commission fee through the bank's terminals, added the press service.

From <https://en.trend.az/> 04/01/2022

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### **Azerbaijan Plans to Strengthen Electronic System Resistance to Cyber Threats - Cybersecurity Association**

BAKU, Azerbaijan, April 23. Azerbaijan plans to strengthen the electronic system resistance to cyber threats, Chairman of the Azerbaijan Cybersecurity Association Rahid Alekberli, Trend reports. According to him, a large number of cyber threats are recorded on the web. "These threats include DDoS attacks, cyber fraud, and some others. The digitalization and information system development is part of Azerbaijan's

development strategy," Alekberli said. "Work on strengthening the country's human resources potential, and relevant projects will be implemented to strengthen digitalization will be carried out," he added.

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## **IRAN: Eyeing to Boost Health Tourism**

Iran is seeking to promote health tourism by marketing to increase employment, said the head of the health tourism department in the Ministry of Health Mohammad Reza Tarjoman, Trend reports citing IRNA. "Total of one million tourists visited Iran, mostly from neighbor countries for health and medical care annually," he said. There are 200 medical centers dedicated to treating foreign patients, and the country's annual health tourism revenue has been about \$3,000 to \$5,000. Iran's health tourism declined 70 percent in the past two years following the coronavirus.

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## **KYRGYZSTAN: Seeing Decrease in Unemployment Rate**

The number of unemployed people registered by the State employment service of Kyrgyzstan decreased by 2.4 percent in February 2022 compared to the same period last year, Trend reports citing the statement of the Eurasian Economic Commission. The number of unemployed registered in the employment services across the Eurasian Economic Union decreased by 61.6 percent, including in Russia - by 69.2 percent, Belarus - by 22.2 percent, Kazakhstan - by 15.7 percent, Kyrgyzstan - by 2.4 percent. At least, 136 800 unemployed citizens were employed across the EAEU in February 2022. This is 19.7 percent more than in January 2022 and 45.7 percent less than February 2021. In total, 251,000 people have been employed since the beginning of the year," reports the Eurasian Economic Commission.

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## **KAZAKHSTAN: Economic Growth Accelerated Up to 4.4% in Q1**

Kazakh National Economy Minister Alibek Kuantyrov told the Government meeting about the main economic growth indicators in the first quarter of 2022, Trend reports citing Kazinform. In January-March this year the country's economic growth rates accelerated up to 4.4%. Kuantyrov reported on the growth acceleration in the country's real economy, onward growth in exports, and sustainable growth rates in the service industry. As stated there, growth in the real economy made 5.9%, and business activity increased up to 2.8%. The pace of fixed investment growth made 1.5%. Capital investments, excluding the mining industry, grew by 0.6%. Investments into construction rose by 2.2. times, into education by 2.2 times, public administration



and social services by 78.5%. He noted the best indicators were recorded in the city of Shymkent, Akmola, and Pavlodar regions. As earlier reported, this January-February the foreign trade turnover of Kazakhstan increased by 53% to reach USD 18.2 bln. Export grew by 71.4% to stand at USD 12.1 bln. Thereat, the country's processed goods export rose by 47% to hit USD 3.5 bln," Kuantyrov said.

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## **Kazakhstan Talks Imbalanced Introduction of Cashless Payments**

Imbalances in the issue of introducing non-cash payments in Kazakhstan remain between regions and in rural-urban relations, the country's National Bank (NBK) told Trend. According to the bank, the imbalances remain despite the fact that the volume of non-cash transactions in the country has notably grown in recent years, and the share of non-cash payments amounted to 83 percent in 2021. "The introduction of digital tenge into circulation is expected to strengthen the positive dynamics in the transition to cashless payments and stabilize the imbalances due to the possibility of offline transactions," the NBK noted. "Besides, this will allow the market participants to get access to a greater number of potential customers, who previously were hard to reach in these terms due to geographical, technical, cultural, and behavioral restrictions and characteristics, for their further integration into the participants' own ecosystems." "The introduction of the digital tenge will accelerate innovation not only in the banking sector but also among fintech companies. The new form of the national currency will give the market a unique tool which will allow creating more convenient and technologically less capital-intensive modern financial services," the bank noted. "In particular, the development of completely new fintech products based on the advantages of "digital cash" using smart contract technology will become available to the market participants," concluded the bank.

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## **TURKMENISTAN: Paperless Data Exchange Project to Contribute to Increasing Resilience to Global Crises - ESCAP**

The paperless data exchange project will help countries, in particular Turkmenistan, to become more resilient to crises and pandemics, as this can reduce physical interaction between the parties, Public Information Officer (ESCAP) Kavita Sukanandan told Trend. She noted that ESCAP is the secretariat for the implementation of the Framework Agreement on the Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in the Asia-Pacific Region, a UN treaty that is dedicated to promoting the digitalization of trade. "It is expected that the global crisis will not affect the implementation of the project, since it will be carried out by local expert consultants using an online guide," Sukanandan said. The ESCAP representative added that the paperless data exchange project is part of ESCAP's support to the



Government of Turkmenistan in assessing readiness for cross-border paperless trade and developing a national action plan. According to her, ESCAP has already provided support to several member countries in the Asia-Pacific region in assessing readiness for cross-border paperless trade.

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## **Turkmenistan Reveals Production Figures for 1Q2022**

BAKU, Azerbaijan, April 27. From January through March 2022, according to the Ministry of Trade and Foreign Economic Relations of Turkmenistan, the growth rate of trade turnover amounted to 103.6 percent, production – to 107.4 percent compared to the same period last year, Trend reports with reference to Jeyhun News. The volume of products produced by enterprises of the Ministry of Textile Industry, including cotton yarn and fabrics, is 133.8 and 125.2 percent, respectively, sewing and knitwear – 119.8 percent, and leather – 109.1 percent. The implementation of the plan for the production of carpet products at the enterprises of the Türkmenhaly State Association of Turkmenistan amounted to 120.7 percent. According to the Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, the growth in agricultural and food production in three months reached 164.5 percent, and industrial production – by 108.1 percent. With the increasing dynamics of the construction of industrial and social facilities in Turkmenistan, the industry is becoming one of the most important sectors of the economy, which is given an important role in the implementation of import substitution programs and increasing the export potential of the state.

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## **Oceania**

### **AUSTRALIA: Millions Start Receiving \$250 Cost-of-Living Payments from Federal Government**

Six million Australians will receive a \$250 payment from the federal government this week to ease the rising cost of living. The one-off cash handout, announced in the federal budget, will be paid to pensioners, welfare recipients, veterans, some self-funded retirees and concession card holders between Wednesday and Friday. Recipients will receive an email from Services Australia once the money has been transferred to their designated bank account. It's suggested that people who are eligible ensure their personal details are up-to-date to avoid any delays. The pre-election sweetener is one of multiple measures announced by Treasurer Josh Frydenberg last month to ease soaring cost-of-living pressures. "Global factors such as high oil prices due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and supply chain disruptions due to COVID are putting pressure on household budgets here at home," Frydenberg said in a statement.

“That is why in the Budget we committed to a temporary, targeted and responsible cost of living package.” Today the first batch of the Coalition’s \$250 cost of living payments will begin hitting the bank accounts of millions of eligible Australian pensioners, income support recipients, veterans and concession cardholders.” If you receive any of the following payments, you will be eligible for the handout. While not receiving the \$250 payment, more than 10 million working Australians are also set to benefit from the federal government’s cost-of-living package later this year. People who take home less than \$126,000 a year will receive a \$420 offset when they file their tax return from July.

The one-off bonus will be combined with the existing low-and-middle-income tax offset, meaning individuals could receive up to \$1500 in tax relief. “This comes on top of the halving of fuel excise which has seen fuel prices come down from above \$2 per litre to around \$1.70 nationally today,” Frydenberg said. According to the federal government, someone filling up their tank today is saving \$14 for a small car, \$19 for a medium car and \$26 for a large car, compared to last month. The \$420 payment and fuel excise cut all but guaranteed to remain in place despite the upcoming election, with Labor vowing to adopt the measures if they win government.

From <https://7news.com.au> 04/27/2022

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## **NEW ZEALAND: 800,000 NZers Lack the Basic Skills to Navigate Online World**

New BNZ research shows 800,000 New Zealanders lack the digital skills to use everyday online tools and services and take part in the digital economy. The figures represent 20% of the adult population and is consistent with BNZs inaugural digital skills research released a year ago that identified the same groups in society missing out. BNZ Chief Economist Paul Conway says the lack of digital skills for such a significant number of New Zealanders is concerning. He says, “Digital technology is engrained in our lives. We all need to work harder to increase digital skills of New Zealanders to ensure more people can take advantage of the benefits and opportunities of being online. “There is a strong relationship between the extent to which people use their digital skills at work and average incomes. Having better digital skills increases the likelihood of working in an industry that pays higher wages.

“This year we can see an extra 5% of the population have improved their digital skills to the highest level we measure. This is great news, but unfortunately 20% of the population still lack essential digital skills, which is unchanged from last year,” he says. Digital harm Conway says the research found New Zealanders are nearly in full agreement (94%) that the internet provides them with more advantages than disadvantages. However, BNZ also measured the impacts of digital harms and found more than half (53%) of the population experienced at least one of: spending too

much time online; scams; harmful personal messages; or harmful content on public sites. The research also found those with below essential digital skills are more than twice as likely to have low confidence in checking the accuracy of online information compared to the total population, as are disabled people.

Conway says, "The internet gives us so much, but we need to ensure that digital harms don't fall disproportionately on a few. "Increasing people's skills, not only on how to navigate the internet, but on how to recognise and avoid scams, discern what's legitimate and deal with trolls is vital if they are to reap the full benefits of the digital world," he says. Working on a digital future "Work to increase digital skills is a job for both the public and private sectors," says Conway. "BNZ is supporting New Zealanders to be safer online with its Scam Savvy Tools and has improved the way it supports its customers to transition to digital banking with digital education sessions and a dedicated over-70 year old customer help team that supports older customers to bank online. "We're also excited to be a part of the Digital Boost Alliance where corporates have banded together to advance Aotearoa to become a high performing digital nation. "We've made bold commitments as part of our pledge, many of which will soon roll out. The opportunities and challenges that digital offers requires a coordinated response and it's great to see businesses stepping up," he says.

From <https://www.infonews.co.nz> 04/08/2022

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## **Business, Government and NGOs Join to End Modern Slavery and Worker Exploitation**

The Government is taking steps to protect vulnerable workers, strengthen trade and champion human rights through new proposals released today. "New Zealanders have a growing awareness around the issue of worker exploitation and modern slavery in supply chains, and they expect that the goods and services they purchase in New Zealand are not contributing to this harm. That's why today we are publishing proposed legislative options to help prevent modern slavery and worker exploitation," says Michael Wood. "Treating people fairly is the New Zealand way and these proposals highlight how we can develop solutions to slavery and worker exploitation, in our domestic and international supply chains. This will support human rights in a transparent and sustainable way.

"These proposal also deliver on a 2020 Election Manifesto to explore the implementation of modern slavery legislation in New Zealand to eliminate exploitation in supply chains. "Included in the proposals is a requirement for organisations to take action if they become aware of modern slavery or worker exploitation. In addition, large organisations will be required to undertake due diligence to prevent, mitigate and remedy modern slavery and worker exploitation. "We've worked closely with businesses, non-governmental organisations, unions and academics through our advisory group chaired by Rob Fyfe. These proposals

will drive meaningful change. “Many of our international trading partners already have modern slavery legislation, and New Zealand now needs to join others showing global leadership on these important issues.

“Increasingly international partners expect New Zealand to be taking action on these issues. It is the right thing to do, it is consistent with kiwi values, and it will benefit our trade and international relationships. “While modern slavery and worker exploitation may appear limited in New Zealand, we know the hidden nature of these crimes means vulnerable people are less likely, or able, to seek help or report their experience. That’s why we need to ensure we have adequate protections in place. “This transformative work has been a high priority for the Government and has wide reaching impact. I feel confident that New Zealand will join our partners in the global solution to this serious issue,” said Michael Wood. Consultation on the proposals has opened today and submissions can be made until 7 June 2022.

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 04/08/2022

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## **New Resources for Schools on Consent, Gender Diversity & Inclusion**

Associate Education Minister Jan Tinetti has today launched a number of new resources to support wellbeing, and the teaching and learning of relationships and sexuality education (RSE) in schools and kura. “I want all our schools to be safe places for all our students whatever their gender, race, nationality, beliefs, or sexual orientation. “Students who are happy and confident learn better. These new wellbeing resources will help our children and young people build quality relationships throughout their lives, with each other, and with others in their schools and communities. They are all designed to foster a sense of confidence and trust, and an appreciation of difference and diversity in our schools and our communities,” Jan Tinetti says.

“These resources include information about consent, digital safety, and healthy relationships. They are clear, easy to use, bicultural and inclusive. There are resources to provide teachers with practical skills and evidence-based information to talk about pornography. The suite also includes resources specifically designed for Māori-medium settings and for English-medium settings,” Jan Tinetti says. “These resources have been developed in collaboration with teachers, young people, universities, government departments, and non-government agencies. The new module – Ka huri i te kōrero | Changing the conversation – was, for example, developed by the Ministry of Education and the Classification Office. It supports teachers to talk about pornography when delivering relationships and sexuality education. It can also be used by other educators outside of schools.” “These new resources reflect feedback that schools need to take more action against bullying, violence, and child abuse, to be more inclusive, and to help students recognise the

importance of diversity and respect in relationships. The new resources, along with the curriculum guide released in 2020, are our response to these calls,” Jan Tinetti says.

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 04/13/2022

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## **Cycle Tourism Riding High as Popularity Grows**

New Zealand’s iconic cycle trails are experiencing a boom in popularity and new research shows they are driving economic activity in the regions as well as benefits for health and wellbeing. Tourism Minister Stuart Nash has released two reports into cycle trails and cycle tourism. The first report analyses the 22 Great Rides in the Ngā Haerenga cycle trail network. The second report provides insights into cycle tourism trends here and in Australia. “Cycle trails and cycle tourism not only benefit the health of cyclists and walkers, they are boosting local economies to further accelerate the recovery,” said Stuart Nash. “The 22 Great Rides of the Ngā Haerenga cycle trails network have enjoyed a surge in use from people on bikes and on foot, with almost 2.19 million trips in the year to 30 June 2021.

“It is an increase of more than 204,000 trips annually, or 10.3 per cent growth in trail usage. The report compares June 2020 to June 2021 data with research from the year February 2019 to February 2020, when there were 1.98 million trips. “Following the border closure in 2020, Kiwi families increasingly took to their bikes and to walking in the great outdoors. There was a corresponding surge in spending and economic activity in the regions. “The number of visitor nights in accommodation providers along the Great Rides cycle trails was 3.62 million in the year to June 2021. It was an annual increase of 560,000 visitor nights, representing growth of 18 per cent. “Visitor spending attributed to the Great Rides cycle trails was \$951 million in the year to June 2021, an increase of \$226 million, or an impressive 31 percent growth in economic activity.

“Cyclists and walkers are spending more on regional accommodation, food, beverage and hospitality providers, and associated tourism and leisure activities like transport or cultural events. Cycle trails are bringing a direct economic contribution to the regions. “Cycle trails and cycle tourism are incredibly popular with Kiwis, whether they live locally or are exploring further afield. Cyclists and walkers appear to have taken to heart the Tourism NZ promotion to ‘do something new, New Zealand.’ “The research estimated a total of \$11 million of health benefits for those using the Great Rides, and many cyclists reporting an improved sense of wellbeing and mental health, increased appreciation of the natural environment, and improved physical fitness.

“Around 43 per cent of the funding for the Ngā Haerenga Great Rides comes from central government, including the Conservation Department, Waka Kotahi, and MBIE.

Local government provides around 33 per cent, and the remainder comes from private sources. “The second report, Cycle Tourism Insights, shows around 27 percent of Kiwi adults participate in cycle tourism and a further 18 per cent are interested in a cycle holiday in the next two years. The potential local cycle tourism market totals 1.8 million people. “The re-opening of the Australian tourism market provides a prime opportunity to develop cycle tourism in New Zealand. “An estimated 21 per cent of adult Australians already participate in cycle tourism, while a further 13 per cent are interested in a cycle holiday in the next two years. The potential Australian cycle tourism market totals around 6.9 million people.

“The cycle trails in New Zealand are world-leading and the network in the lower half of the South Island is especially impressive. “Opportunities to develop the market include better options for those with disabilities and their families, bike-packers, a low carbon tourism option, better connected destinations, and improved accommodation, eateries, toilets, and cycle services on some trails. “A lot of work goes into maintaining a Great Ride. They’re run by trail managers backed by around 800 volunteers and a very supportive NZ Cycle Trails Inc. and its Board. They do a great job planting native trees, fencing waterways and protecting native species through pest management work. They can be proud of this evaluation report,” Stuart Nash said.

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## **Government Supports More People Off Benefit**

Minister for Social Development and Employment Carmel Sepuloni says the Government’s response to COVID-19 has helped keep people in work, with March Quarter Benefit statistics showing a further fall in the number of people receiving a main benefit and jobseeker assistance. “There are 19,883 fewer people on a main benefit compared to December, with near record numbers of people moving into work,” Carmel Sepuloni said. “The figures also show an annual fall of 4.8 percent in the number of people receiving a main benefit. “The Government’s quick response to COVID-19 has worked, with initiatives such as the Wage Subsidy and our economic support packages keeping people in work and delivering record low unemployment.

“Two years into our response to the Global Pandemic we have continued to defy Treasury forecasts, which predicted 487,500 people on a main benefit in January 2021. This did not happen and there were 348,339 people receiving a Main Benefit as at March 2022. “Despite the rhetoric from the Opposition, the facts show that there are a smaller proportion of workers on a benefit now than when National was Government during the Global Financial Crisis. “There are now 11.1 percent of working age New Zealanders receiving a Main Benefit two years on from the beginning of the pandemic, this compares to 13.1 percent two years after the Global Financial Crisis. “The facts clearly show that when it comes to keeping people in

work, we are doing better in our response to COVID-19 than National did during the Global Financial Crisis.

“The number of people receiving a Jobseeker Work Ready main benefit, is now 100,854, or 3.2 percent of the working age population. This is in line with the reported unemployment rate in the Household Labour Force Survey. “Also encouraging is the high number of people moving off a benefit and into paid employment. March 2021, saw a record 32,883 people move off a benefit and into paid employment. March 2022 is a close second with 31,524 people finding work in the first three months of the year. “The investment we have made in front-line work focused case management is helping people move off benefit and back into work quickly. This investment is also paying off for longer term beneficiaries with 10,506 people who had been on a main benefit for a year or more finding employment in the March Quarter. “While the signs are encouraging, we will continue to watch the situation closely and respond where needed,” Carmel Sepuloni said.

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## **Health Reform – Govt Ensures Local Say in Health Services**

The Government has announced how New Zealanders will have a real voice in determining the health services provided in their community as part of the new health system. “Today we’re announcing nine locality network pilots to improve how healthcare is delivered in local communities,” Health Minister Andrew Little said. “The new locality approach will be a collective of networks that will provide advice to Health New Zealand (HNZ) and the Māori Health Authority (MHA) on the health services needs identified by their communities. “Iwi and the local community will determine their own geographic area that will become the ‘locality’, so the area it serves makes sense to the people that live and work there. “The area for each locality network will be determined by a range of criteria including, priority population groups, iwi boundaries and local government boundaries.

“The areas will be small enough to still feel local and everyone in Aotearoa New Zealand will fit into a locality that reflects their community “Once Health New Zealand and the Māori Health Authority have worked with communities to identify their localities, a locality commissioner will be assigned to work with community and providers – to meet and talk about their priorities for local care. “This targeted engagement will inform a locality plan that will influence local health care services. “People will have a more direct voice to determine how health services are delivered because locality networks are required to consult, engage and capture the input of the communities they represent including iwi, local authorities and social sector agencies rather than relying on a small number of elected reps under the DHBs,” Andrew Little said. These first nine locality networks will have additional support so HNZ and MHA understands how to best refine and roll-out the localities approach



over the next two years. “People living in these nine areas will start to see changes over the next six months. Organisations responsible for providing care will start to work more closely together.”

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 04/21/2022

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## **Government Supports Extra Housing Development**

The Government is funding further infrastructure for five Auckland suburbs undergoing regeneration to support new and existing housing for New Zealanders and their families, Housing Minister Dr Megan Woods has announced. Around 400 urban renewal projects in Mt Roskill, Mangere, Tāmaki, Oranga and Northcote will receive funding from the Government’s \$3.8 billion Housing Acceleration Fund (HAF) to unlock more housing. “For too many decades there has been too little investment in infrastructure like pipes and roads that allow new housing to be built. Getting land build-ready by funding infrastructure is a key way to fix the housing crisis we inherited after decades of inaction,” Megan Woods said. “The Large Scale Projects (LSPs) underway in these suburbs are a first of their kind in New Zealand, replacing aged public housing that has reached the end of its life, and creating opportunities for new public, market and affordable housing to be built.

“This \$1.4 billion of HAF funding will develop build-ready land to enable up to 16,000 homes in the suburbs over the next five to sixteen years. “This work will allow for the replacement of around 4,000 Kāinga Ora homes past their use-by date, 2,000 additional Kāinga Ora homes, as well as 10,000 additional affordable and market homes to be built and available for purchase. “It’s also estimated the infrastructure work will unlock potential for a further 11,000 new homes on surrounding privately owned land in these suburbs. “Revitalising these suburbs through this investment has so many benefits; creating capacity for new homes, employment opportunities, improved water assets and a lot of potential for emissions reduction with the suburbs already being well served by public transport options.

“The housing crisis was decades in the making, and we are turning it around through housing policy reforms, and the largest Government investment since the 1970’s to get a lot more new housing built. “Auckland has an estimated housing shortage of more than 25,000 homes. This work will enable quality housing to be built where it is needed most. Together with Auckland City we identified these are places where more growth is wanted, with Auckland City also contributing to the cost of these works,” Megan Woods said. Specific work programmes enabled by the funding are as follows: The Mt Roskill site preparation work includes land decontamination and an upgrade of water infrastructure and addressing flooding issues on 62.8 hectares to enable approximately 5,400 homes.

The Tāmaki site includes decontamination work, transport, and water and storm



water upgrades across 90ha ready for around 4,400 homes. Mangere work includes decontamination works and water and storm water upgrades across 68ha for around 3,800 homes. Northcote upgrades across 8.2ha will create build-ready land for around 1,200 homes. Oranga infrastructure work across 15.6ha includes transport upgrades, including walking and cycling to create build-ready land for around 1,000 homes. Note for Editors: Large Scale Projects (LSPs) are a 20-year portfolio of land development and infrastructure activities that will enable development of new homes to meet critical and growing housing shortages: <https://kaingaora.govt.nz/developments-and-programmes/what-were-building/large-scale-projects/>

The \$3.8 billion Housing Acceleration Fund (HAF) was announced in March 2021. It includes \$350 million for the Māori Housing Acceleration Fund, and approximately \$1 billion for the contestable Infrastructure Acceleration Fund (IAF), which is currently assessing applications. So far the HAF has funded: \$136 million for the Eastern Porirua LSP for wastewater and drinking water upgrades, plus \$6.1 million from the IAF for Kenepuru/Titahi transport and three waters upgrades. \$282 million for Auckland LSPs to enable replacement of 600 public homes, plus create capacity for an additional 1,260 homes. The LSPs have been in delivery since 2017, and investment has so far supported the delivery of around 3,800 homes, including 1,300 affordable homes and 850 new public homes.

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## 5、 Public Finance

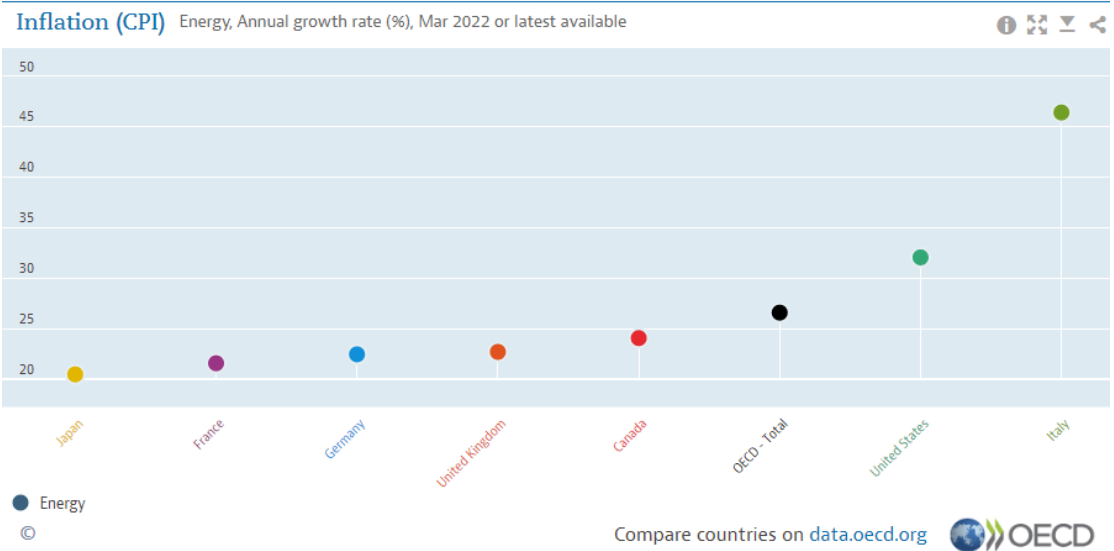
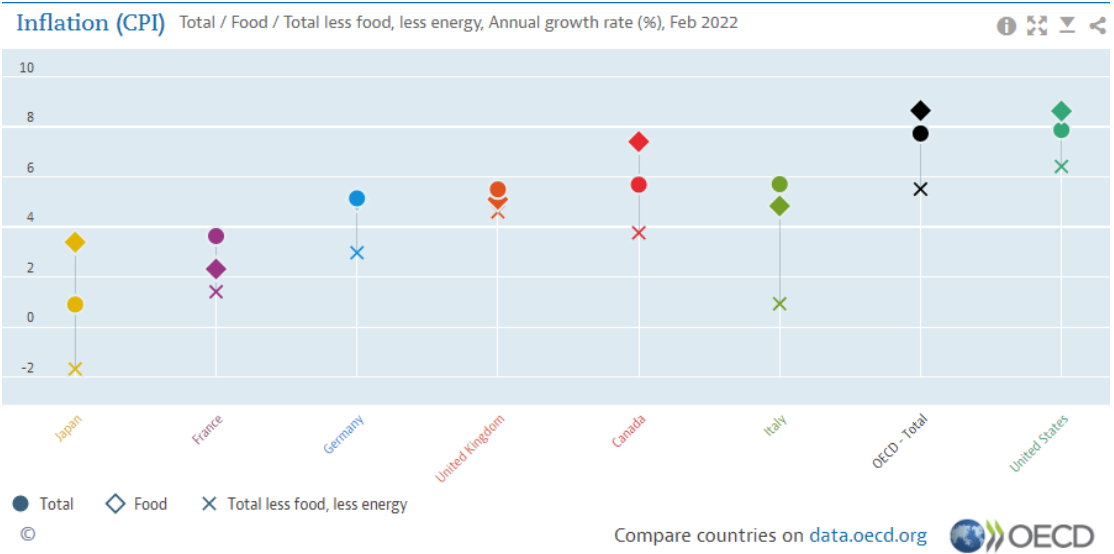
### Asia-Pacific

#### **Inflation in the OECD Area Climbs Further, Hitting 7.7% in February 2022**

Year-on-year inflation in the OECD area rose to 7.7% in February 2022, compared with 7.2% in January 2022, and just 1.7% in February 2021, reaching its highest rate since December 1990. This increase reflected in part another sharp rise in inflation in Turkey, increasing from 48.7% in January to 54.4% in February. Excluding Turkey, inflation in the OECD area rose to 6.3%, following a rate of 5.8% in January 2022. While energy continued to boost inflation in a majority of OECD countries, food price inflation also showed a notable increase. Excluding food and energy, year-on-year inflation in the OECD area increased to 5.5%, after 5.1% in January 2022. Year-on-year inflation in the G20 area also increased in February 2022, reaching 6.8% compared with 6.5% in January 2022. Outside the OECD area, year-on-year inflation rose significantly in Argentina. It was stable in China and South Africa while it decreased in India.

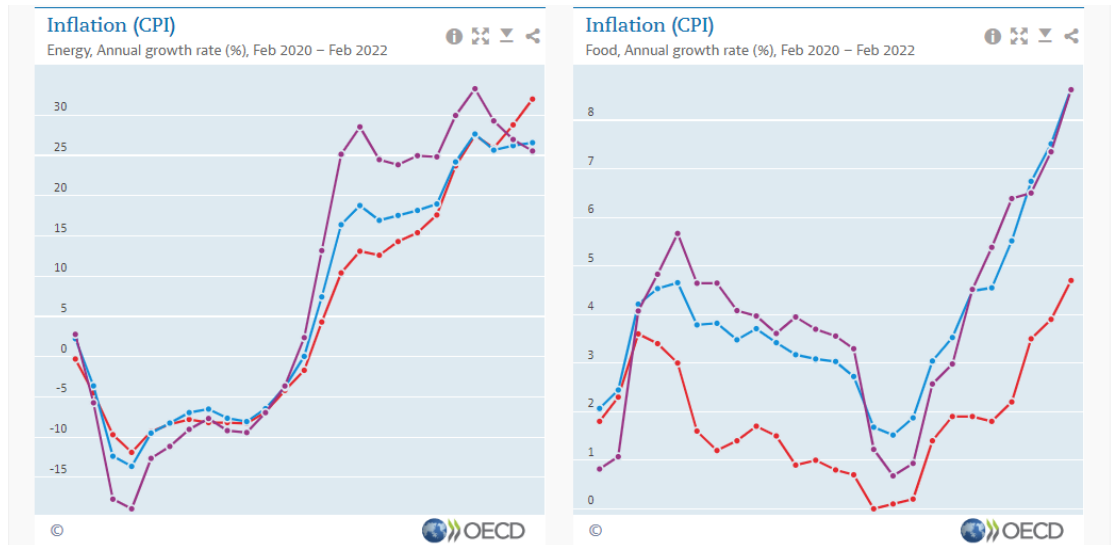
## Consumer prices, selected areas

February 2022, percentage change on the same period of the previous year, %



## Energy (CPI) and Food (CPI), selected areas

February 2020 – February 2022, percentage change on the same period of the previous year, %



From <https://www.oecd.org/> 04/05/2022

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## World Bank Group Ramps Up Financing to Help Countries amid Multiple Crises

The World Bank Group has announced that over the coming weeks it will be discussing with its Governors and Board of Executive Directors a 15-month crisis response financing package of around \$170 billion to help countries address multiple overlapping crises. Of this, the Bank Group is working to provide an initial crisis response of around \$50 billion by June 30, 2022. The response also includes analytical work and policy advice at the country, regional, and global levels to inform well targeted crisis and medium-term interventions. “Developing countries are facing multiple overlapping crises, including the pandemic, rising inflation, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, large macroeconomic imbalances, and energy and food supply shortages. These are causing massive reversals in poverty reduction, education, health, and gender equality,” said World Bank Group President David Malpass. “The World Bank Group will respond to these crises with impact, speed, and scale.”

The World Bank Group has presented to its Governors and Board of Executive Directors a Crisis Roadmap, which will outline the initial fast-track response and possible next steps. This will be followed by a more detailed proposal to be presented to the Bank’s Board by the end of June. This surge response follows the World Bank Group’s fast, comprehensive action to help countries address the COVID-19 crisis, with over \$200 billion committed between April 2020 and March 2022 to fight the health, economic, and social impacts of the pandemic. This response included more than \$73 billion of International Development Association (IDA) resources on grant and highly concessional terms.

The war in Ukraine is provoking a rapidly expanding global crisis, with the economic

and social impacts spreading through commodity markets, trade, financial flows, and impacting market confidence. The surging cost of food, fuel, and fertilizer is increasing hunger, malnutrition, food insecurity, and hardship for millions of poor people around the world. These hardships will exacerbate the existing effects of the ongoing pandemic, on top of fragility in many countries, the effects of climate change, and already severe poverty, inequality, and other development setbacks. If protracted, the impacts of the war in Ukraine, could also lead to lasting fragmentation of global trade and foreign investment networks – channels that have historically played a central role in supporting global economic growth and poverty reduction. While addressing the social and economic impacts arising from the war in Ukraine, the WBG will continue to maintain its focus on protecting the poor and vulnerable, boosting the response capacity of developing countries, and restoring momentum on longer-term development priorities, that include addressing the pandemic, situations of fragility, conflict and violence and its commitment to the climate agenda.

From <https://www.worldbank.org/> 04/19/2022

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## **World Bank, Partners Launch New Fund to Spur Smart Investments in Childcare**

The World Bank and government and foundation partners today launched a new program to scale up quality, affordable childcare in developing countries – a critical investment to build the next generation of human capital and place women at the center of an inclusive global economic recovery. The global Childcare Incentive Fund will catalyze at least \$180 million in new funding in the next 5 years to support childcare in low and middle-income countries, providing wide returns for families, businesses, and economies. “Nearly eight out of 10 children who need childcare live in low- and middle-income countries. At a time when developing economies are hit hard by the pandemic and the impacts of the war in Ukraine, expanding quality, affordable childcare is essential for women to be able to go back to work, open up more economic opportunities, and help young children thrive,” said Mari Pangestu, World Bank Managing Director of Development Policy and Partnerships. “Smart investments in childcare can help countries accelerate equality, build human capital, and promote economic growth in the long term.”

Lack of affordable childcare often keeps women out of the workforce and limits their ability to take on quality employment and earn more. When women earn and control their income, they tend to channel more money toward their children’s health, education, and overall family welfare. Quality childcare provides a safe and stimulating educational environment for children during the critical early years – a period of rapid and consequential development that lays the foundation for future life success. These investments help build human capital, which is intrinsically important for individual well-being, creating more equitable societies, sustaining economic growth, and preventing millions of people from falling into poverty.

The global Childcare Incentive Fund will support countries to design and implement better childcare programs, improve policies, build capacity, generate data, and provide evidence on the impacts of childcare on women's empowerment, early childhood development, and inclusive economic growth. The Fund will match country investments in childcare on a \$1:\$1 basis (up to \$10 million per country), used alongside funding from the World Bank's IDA and IBRD, other development partners, private sector resources, and countries' own commitments, so that each grant helps to catalyze wider investments and returns. The Fund is supported by the governments of Australia, Canada, and the United States; the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation; Echidna Giving; the Ford Foundation; the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation; and the LEGO Foundation. Combined, these pledges will catalyze at least \$180 million in new funding to ensure quality, affordable childcare is available in low- and middle-income countries worldwide.

From <https://www.worldbank.org/> 04/28/2022

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## **Tax Reform Key to Sustainable Growth in Asia and the Pacific**

Putting a price on pollution. Making it easier for small businesses to register. Taxing digital goods and services more effectively. These are some of the ways economies in developing Asia and the Pacific can raise the tax revenue needed to help ensure sustainable growth, according to a new Asian Development Bank (ADB) report. The region faces a shortfall of public funding for priorities such as health, education, infrastructure, the fight against climate change, and the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Available policy reforms, strategically applied, could enable economies in developing Asia to boost tax revenue by as much as 4% of gross domestic product (GDP) on average, according to the Asian Development Outlook (ADO) 2022, released today.

Developing Asia's aging population will require higher spending on pensions and health care, while rising affluence will boost expectations for more and better public goods and services. Vast investments in clean energy are needed to tackle the threat of climate change. To meet these demands and others, countries will need to draw on the full range of private and public financial resources. Solutions for governments to consider include more efficient collection of value-added taxes, reforming tax incentives, bringing more businesses into the formal economy, and optimizing personal income and property taxes. "Economies in Asia and the Pacific will face a growing need for effective public spending in areas like health, education, and the environment," said ADB Chief Economist Albert Park. "Policy reforms that improve tax collection and increase revenue can help the region achieve sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Such reforms must be carried out on a case-by-case basis, and in ways that don't stifle growth or create undue burdens on taxpayers."

Even before the pandemic, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific estimated that the region would need to increase annual spending by about \$1.5 trillion—or about 5% of GDP—to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. By enacting reforms, developing Asia’s economies could increase tax revenue from a pre-pandemic average of around 16% of GDP by 3 to 4 percentage points on average, according to ADB estimates. For instance, making it easier to register a business and lowering transaction costs could bring more small businesses into the formal economy, enhancing tax collection. In Southeast Asia, micro, small, and medium-sized businesses accounted for 98% of all enterprises and 41% of GDP as of 2020. Governments can also improve the collection of taxes from Asia and the Pacific’s burgeoning trade in digital services, which more than tripled since 2005 to \$1.4 trillion in 2020.

Other taxes can raise revenue while directly promoting environmental protection and public health. Carbon pricing instruments and fossil fuel taxes, for example, have been proven to reduce pollution. Taxes on alcohol, tobacco, and unhealthy food and drinks can raise additional revenue by up to 0.6% of GDP, while leading to better health outcomes and reducing medical costs, according to ADO 2022. Public information campaigns drawing on behavioral insights, and better use of digital technologies, can also help enhance tax collection. Improving the quality of government spending is key to tapping people’s intrinsic willingness to pay taxes, the report notes.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 04/06/2022

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## **ADB, LDC Sign \$100 Million Loan to Support Smallholder Farmer Livelihoods and Climate Resilience**

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Louis Dreyfus Company B.V. (LDC) signed a loan of up to \$100 million to help smallholder farmers recover from the economic challenges caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and improve their resilience to climate change impacts. The loan will support LDC’s operations in India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Thailand, and Viet Nam by financing coffee, cotton, and rice inventories for over 50,000 smallholder farmers across these countries. This will help secure food supply chains and reliable incomes for smallholder farmers, and help offset the impact of supply chain disruptions due to the pandemic. “Smallholder farmers, who are already vulnerable to climate change, are facing increasing difficulties due to the pandemic, resulting in income loss, crop and food wastage, and supply chain disruptions,” said ADB Vice-President for Private Sector Operations and Public–Private Partnerships Ashok Lavasa. “ADB’s assistance will help to ensure reliable offtake to farmers, providing a direct way to preserve their livelihoods and their assets, while enabling them to invest in climate-resilient farming practices.”

An accompanying technical assistance (TA) grant will deliver capacity building and

training activities, that will reinforce the benefits of sustainable and climate-resilient agricultural practices for cotton farmers in India and coffee farmers in Indonesia. The TA will support pilot-testing of drip irrigation in cotton fields in India, and use of biochar kilns in Indonesia. Assistance under the TA is expected to benefit about 4,000 farmers, particularly women farmers. The TA funding comprises \$205,000 from ADB's Technical Assistance Special Fund for COVID Recovery and \$385,000 from the Strategic Climate Fund, administered by ADB. "As a leading merchant and processor of agricultural goods, LDC is committed to empowering smallholder farmers, whose activities are key to global food security, to use sustainable farming practices for the benefit of current and future generations," said LDC's Chief Commercial Officer and Head of Asia Region James Zhou. "With the right tools, knowledge, and support, farmers can lastingly improve their yields and livelihoods while preserving the environment. We look forward to collaborating with ADB toward this important goal."

From <https://www.adb.org/> 04/07/2022

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## **ADB Sells \$4 Billion Dual Tranche 3- and 10-Year Global Benchmark Bonds**

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) returned to the United States (US) dollar bond market with the pricing of a 3-year global benchmark bond worth \$3 billion and a 10-year global benchmark bond worth \$1 billion, proceeds of which will be part of ADB's ordinary capital resources. "We appreciate the confidence and consistent support of our investors as we launch our third global benchmark outing for the year amid challenging market conditions," said ADB Treasurer Pierre Van Peteghem. "Through this transaction, we raised \$4 billion across two maturities, which provide us with the resources to continue to assist our developing member countries in Asia and the Pacific." The 3-year bond, with a coupon rate of 2.875% per annum payable semi-annually and a maturity date of 6 May 2025, was priced at 99.882% to yield 12.625 basis points over the 2.625% US Treasury notes due April 2025. The 10-year bond, with a coupon rate of 3.125% per annum payable semi-annually and a maturity date of 27 April 2032, was priced at 99.966% to yield 26.95 basis points over the 1.875% US Treasury notes due February 2032.

The transaction was lead-managed by BofA Securities, Goldman Sachs International, JP Morgan, and Nomura. A syndicate group was also formed consisting of CIBC Capital Markets, Daiwa, DBS, Standard Chartered, and Scotiabank. Both tranches achieved wide primary market distribution. On the 3-year issue, 11% of the bonds were placed in Asia; 41% in Europe, Middle East, and Africa; and 48% in the Americas. By investor type, 36% of the bonds went to central banks and official institutions, 41% to banks, and 23% to fund managers and other types of investors. On the 10-year issue, 46% of the bonds were placed in Asia; 38% in Europe, Middle East, and Africa; and 16% in the Americas. By investor type, 45% of the bonds went



to central banks and official institutions, 34% to banks, and 22% to fund managers and other types of investors. ADB plans to raise \$34 billion–\$36 billion from the capital markets in 2022.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 04/21/2022

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## **ADB Operations Reach \$22.8 Billion in 2021 to Boost Pandemic Response, Promote Green Recovery**

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) committed \$22.8 billion from its own resources in 2021 to help Asia and the Pacific tackle the immediate effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and promote a green recovery. Financial and operational results were published today in ADB's Annual Report 2021. The report summarizes how ADB supported its developing member countries (DMCs) through a combination of finance, knowledge, and partnerships. "ADB firmly believes that addressing the impacts of the pandemic and supporting long-term development are not mutually exclusive," said ADB President Masatsugu Asakawa. "Our sustained COVID-19 response has laid the foundations for an inclusive, resilient, and green recovery, ensuring progress toward our Strategy 2030 objectives." The \$22.8 billion committed in 2021 includes loans and guarantees, grants, equity investments, and technical assistance provided to governments and the private sector. In addition, ADB mobilized \$12.9 billion in cofinancing.

Of ADB's 2021 commitments, \$13.5 billion, or 59%, was for pandemic response, although many of these commitments, such as strengthening the health sector, will also help the region long after the pandemic is over. The bank's pandemic response support included \$4.9 billion in rapid disbursing financing for governments to support structural reforms and address debt sustainability. The financing included \$4.6 billion in policy-based lending and \$250 million through the COVID-19 Pandemic Response Option. As part of the pandemic response, ADB committed \$4.1 billion to enable the procurement and delivery of safe and effective vaccines for its DMCs. The bank also provided \$3.3 billion to the private sector to keep businesses open, trade flowing, and make medical products and services available. A broad range of knowledge support guided COVID-19 response and recovery plans. Addressing longer-term development challenges, such as climate change, remained an important focus of ADB's 2021 operations.

"The battle against climate change will be won or lost in Asia and the Pacific. To succeed, our region needs to accelerate the transition to a low-carbon future," said Mr. Asakawa. To help meet its new elevated ambition of \$100 billion in cumulative climate financing by 2030, the bank announced a series of financing initiatives to bolster the region's low-carbon development. For example, ADB launched the Energy Transition Mechanism that will leverage private and public investments to finance the early retirement of coal-power assets, scale up clean and renewable



energy solutions, and ensure the transition is just and affordable. All of ADB's 2021 commitments include elements that will specifically benefit women and girls. The bank also ramped up efforts to assist governments to mobilize domestic financial resources essential for sustainable growth, including through the launch of the Asia Pacific Tax Hub, a vehicle to support tax and related reforms region-wide.

ADB's 2021 commitments were funded by its second-largest borrowing program to date, which raised \$35.8 billion through the capital markets. ADB sold a record volume of thematic bonds last year and issued education bonds and blue bonds for ocean health for the first time. The Annual Report also details a series of internal reforms underway to ensure ADB has the right skills, culture, structure, and tools to fulfill its mission. ADB's Annual Report 2021 is fully digital and is also available in a mobile-friendly digital format containing rich multimedia content. See [www.adb.org/ar2021/digital](http://www.adb.org/ar2021/digital).

From <https://www.adb.org/> 04/25/2022

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## **ADB Provides \$10 Million Grant to Help Samoa Manage COVID-19**

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has released a \$10 million (25.6 million tala) grant from its Pacific Disaster Resilience Program (Phase 3) to help finance the Government of Samoa's response to the community transmission of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Samoa continues to battle a surge in the domestic transmission of the virus. The Ministry of Health has confirmed 13 COVID-19-related deaths since the first case was detected at the Tupua Tamasese Meaole National Hospital on 17 March 2022. The total cumulative number of COVID-19 cases, from border and community cases, stands at about 7,185. "This quick disbursing financing will enable the Government of Samoa to rapidly put in place measures to contain the virus," said ADB Director General for the Pacific Leah Gutierrez. "Rising vaccination rates will help Samoa and most of the Pacific subregion recover from the effects of the pandemic." The ADB-supported Pacific Disaster Resilience Program (Phase 3) fills a financing gap common to many Pacific developing member countries during disasters, providing a predictable and quick-disbursing source of financing for early response and recovery activities.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 04/25/2022

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## **East Asia**

### **CHINA: Home Prices Generally Stable in March**

China continued to see a generally stable housing market in March, with the month-on-month growth of home prices in first-tier cities declining, official data showed Friday. New home prices in four first-tier cities -- Beijing, Shanghai,

Shenzhen and Guangzhou -- rose 0.3 percent month on month in March, compared with a 0.5 percent increase in February, according to the National Bureau of Statistics. Prices of second-hand homes in the four cities gained 0.4 percent in March, easing from the 0.5 percent month-on-month increase in February. New home prices in second-tier cities remained flat compared with that in February, while those in third-tier cities witnessed a month-on-month decrease of 0.2 percent last month. "In March, home prices in the 70 major cities displayed a stable trend on a monthly basis," said the bureau's senior statistician Sheng Guoqing, adding that on a year-on-year basis, these cities saw their housing prices decline or register slower growth.

New home prices in first-tier cities rose 4.3 percent year on year in March, narrowing from 4.4 percent in February. New home prices in second-tier cities went up 1.6 percent, while those in third-tier cities decreased 0.6 percent compared with the same period last year. Since the beginning of this year, multiple factors, including COVID-19 resurgences, have dented the confidence of investors in the property market and the housing transactions have shrunk, said Liu Lin, a researcher with the National Development and Reform Commission. To withstand the challenges, China has rolled out various policies and measures such as increasing the supply of government-subsidized rental housing, lowering mortgage interest rates and improving the supervision and transaction services in the property market.

Li Yujia, chief researcher with the Guangdong Housing Policy Research Center, noted that "the certainty for further recovery in the real estate market is increasing." "In the second half of 2022, the epidemic is expected to be contained, and the supportive policies will start to take effect," Li said. Experts reckon that the principle of "housing is for living in, not for speculation" has been well accepted in the society and that the real estate sector is at a critical stage of exploring a new model of development. In this year's government work report, China reiterated the principle and vowed to keep land prices, housing prices and market expectations stable. The country will move faster to develop the long-term rental market, promote the construction of government-subsidized housing, and support the commodity housing market in better meeting the reasonable needs of homebuyers, according to the report.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 04/15/2022

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## **China to Step Up Export Tax Rebates to Support Foreign Trade**

China will further leverage export tax rebates to provide stronger support for foreign trade enterprises, according to a circular jointly released by the State Taxation Administration and other government organs. The circular outlines measures to improve export tax rebate policies and streamline procedures for applications. Efforts will be made to strengthen the linkage of export credit insurance and export tax

rebate policies, and improve rebate policies for processing trade firms, according to the circular. The country will step up efforts to enhance data sharing and smooth the connections among customs, tax and other departments to further streamline export tax rebate procedures, it said. Efforts will also be made to support cross-border e-commerce firms by encouraging qualified enterprises to actively claim export tax rebates, it said. A State Council executive meeting earlier this month decided to increase export tax rebates to promote foreign trade development. Enterprises with better credit records will enjoy greater customs clearance and tax refund facilitation.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 04/22/2022

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## **China Halves Stock Transfer Fees to Invigorate Capital Market**

China has decided to halve stock transfer fees starting Friday to further lower the trading costs for investors and spur market vitality, according to a circular issued by the country's stock clearing agency. Stock transfer fees will be generally cut to 0.001 percent of stock trading turnover, the China Securities Depository and Clearing Co., Ltd. said on its website late on Thursday. The move aims at promoting the stable and healthy operation of the market, as well as better shoring up the real economy, the company said.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 04/29/2022

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## **JAPAN: Bank of Japan Chief Yen's Sharp Fall Has Negative Impact**

Bank of Japan Governor Kuroda Haruhiko said the yen's sharp fall has a negative impact on households and smaller firms, and that the BOJ will closely monitor the situation. "We need to consider that excessive rapid fluctuations in exchange rates have a negative impact on the economy by raising uncertainty," the central bank chief said. Japan's currency has lost nearly 10 yen to the dollar in about one month. The BOJ's ultra-low interest-rate policy contrasts with higher US rates, which is prompting investors to dump the yen. The yen's rapid drop is causing import prices to soar. Kuroda said this will increase the burden on households, and hurt the earnings of smaller firms which cannot pass on the higher costs. But he said the BOJ has not changed its overall view on the currency, and that the bank believes a weaker yen is a plus for the economy as a whole. Kuroda said higher energy costs are mainly driving the current price increases. The central bank chief said the BOJ will continue its monetary easing measures, which are aimed at bolstering real-term household income and corporate profits.

From <https://www3.nhk.or.jp> 04/18/2022

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## Japan Readies \$48bn Package to Ease Inflation Pain

Japan plans to spend 6.2 trillion yen (\$48.2 billion) on additional gasoline subsidies, low-interest loans and cash assistance to alleviate the pain of consumers and small businesses facing rising prices, Nikkei has learned. The government frames the economic package, to be compiled as early as Tuesday, as comprehensive relief measures. But critics see them as a short-term remedy, especially as other countries tackle more fundamental changes on energy and other key economic factors in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. To pay for the package, the government will request 2.7 trillion yen under a supplementary fiscal 2022 budget to be drafted by the end of the current parliamentary session. It will secure another 1.5 trillion yen from its reserve funds. Together with private-sector contributions, the entire package is expected to total 13.2 trillion yen.

The largest portion of the government's spending -- 1.5 trillion yen -- will fund the response to surging crude oil prices. To limit the increase in gasoline prices, the government will raise its maximum subsidy to oil distributors to 35 yen per liter from 25 yen and extend the program until the end of September. A total of 1.3 trillion yen is expected go toward small and midsize businesses. Japan will further lower interest rates on loans from government-backed financial institutions to coronavirus-hit smaller businesses, allowing them to borrow money for virtually no interest and with no collateral until the end of September. A new subsidy will be created for companies that are reorganizing operations in response to inflation. Japan looks to spend another 1.3 trillion yen on programs for low-income households and others in need of assistance. It will provide 50,000 yen per child and will extend help to fishing-, lumber- and wheat-related businesses to ensure a stable supply of energy, materials and food.

From <https://www.newsonjapan.com> 04/26/2022

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## BOJ Holds Policy Intact, Ups FY 2022 Inflation Forecast

The Bank of Japan decided Thursday to keep its current monetary easing policy unchanged while raising its fiscal 2022 inflation forecast. The BOJ will continue its yield curve control scheme to guide the yield on the benchmark 10-year Japanese government bond issue around zero pct while imposing a short-term policy interest rate of minus 0.1 pct. In a press conference held after the end the same day of central bank's two-day policy-setting meeting, BOJ Governor Haruhiko Kuroda said, "We will support economic activities by continuing to implement the current powerful easing measures in a tenacious manner." On the recent sharp depreciation of the yen, Kuroda said, "It is necessary to take account of the possibility of excessive swings (in the Japanese currency's exchange rates) affecting adversely (the economy and prices)." But at the same time, he stressed that he keeps believing that a weak yen benefits the economy as a whole.

From <https://www.nippon.com> 04/28/2022

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## **SOUTH KOREA: To Invest Over 300 Bln Won to Enhance Aviation Security with Advanced Tech**

South Korea said Tuesday it will introduce a new screening system at airports around 2027, a cutting-edge technology that could help passengers avoid the hassle of taking out laptops and liquid items for security checks. The smart "walk through" system can detect laptops, radioactive materials, prohibited liquids and other items inside cabin baggage, which could shorten the screening process from the current 37 seconds to 7 seconds, according to the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport. The new system is part of a 301.3 billion won (US\$243.5 million) basic plan on aviation security, which calls for a set of measures to improve the security system at airports and other related facilities and to secure advanced technologies in the field. The government also plans to earmark some 49.9 billion won over the next five years to develop advanced screening equipment that adopts such technologies as artificial intelligence and terahertz, in line with a growing need for an alternative transportation mode, such as urban air mobility.

The 2022-2026 plan also called for integrating information on aviation security, which is managed separately by the central government and related agencies, and digitalizing all related materials by 2023. Those information will be used to set up a system designed to analyze terror attacks and cyberattacks against airports and aircraft by 2026 so as to prevent and better respond to such growing security challenges, according to the ministry. It also vowed to set up a drone detection system at major local airports to effectively nullify illegal unmanned vehicles. "We will also expand the mutual recognition of security standards with foreign aviation authorities to simplify the boarding process and to boost passengers' convenience," the ministry said.

From <https://en.yna.co.kr> 04/12/2022

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## **More Active Use of Monetary Policy Needed to Fight Inflation BOK Report**

The Bank of Korea (BOK) needs to "actively" utilize its monetary policy as a tool to tamp down inflation amid worries that prices are under growing upward pressure from supply chain disruptions, soaring commodity costs and rebounding consumption, a central bank report said Sunday. The report came days after the central bank hiked its policy rate to 1.5 percent to rein in inflation. The rate increase marked the fourth of its kind since last August and the highest in about three years. "With inflation pressure spreading in all directions and inflation expectation also on the rise, operating monetary policy in a way to ease anxiety among economic players

seems to be desirable in light of macroeconomic stabilization in the mid-term period," the report said. The report drew attention to major countries' different policy choices made to respond to surging prices in the wake of the oil shock in the 1970s. The report said that Germany used a policy mix of monetary tightening and expansionary fiscal action on the belief that protracted inflation was a "monetary phenomenon," while the United States and Britain adopted expansionary fiscal and monetary stance as they believed that inflation was caused mainly by high costs.

"As a result, the U.S. and Britain continued to suffer macroeconomic challenges such as high levels of inflation and unemployment into early 1980s after the oil shock ended but Germany saw relatively favorable economic conditions as inflation and employment were stabilized," the report said. The report said that the global supply bottlenecks are persisting longer than initially expected, international raw material prices are rising sharply amid the Ukraine war, and China's pandemic-caused lockdown has spawned concerns that supply disruptions could be here to stay for a longer period of time. "Demand-side pressure on inflation is also expected to mount as domestic consumption is showing signs of recovery on easing antivirus curbs," the report added. South Korea's consumer prices jumped 4.1 percent in March from a year earlier, the fastest gain in more than 10 years. The prices quickened from a 3.7 percent on-year rise in February. The BOK has predicted that prices could grow faster than its February prediction of a 3.1 percent rise for this year due to more upward pressure from geopolitical tensions and other issues.

From <https://en.yna.co.kr> 04/17/2022

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## **IMF Cuts 2022 Growth Outlook for S. Korea to 2.5 Pct, Ups Inflation Estimate to 4 Pct**

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Tuesday lowered its 2022 economic growth outlook for South Korea to the 2-percent range, while raising its inflation projection to 4 percent, as energy costs surged amid the Ukraine crisis. In its World Economic Outlook, the IMF revised down its growth forecast for Asia's fourth-largest economy to 2.5 percent this year from its March estimate of 3 percent. The IMF also sharply hiked this year's inflation outlook for South Korea by 0.9 percentage point from its earlier projection of 3.1 percent. The revised outlook came as the global economy is expected to undergo a marked slowdown and face high inflation due to the fallout of Russia's war with Ukraine. "Economic damage from the conflict will contribute to a significant slowdown in global growth in 2022 ... Elevated inflation will complicate the trade-offs central banks face between containing price pressures and safeguarding growth," the IMF said.

The IMF lowered its 2022 growth forecast for the global economy to 3.6 percent from its earlier estimate of 4.4 percent. The South Korean economy has been on a recovery path on the back of robust exports and improving private spending. But it

faces growing uncertainty at home and abroad due to the fast spread of the omicron variant and surging fuel prices caused by the Ukraine conflict. The IMF's growth forecast for South Korea is lower than the Bank of Korea (BOK)'s estimate of 3 percent and the 2.7 percent projections by global credit appraisers Moody's Investors Service and Fitch Ratings. Still, the IMF's 0.5 percentage-point cut for Korea's growth outlook was smaller than an average of the 0.6 percentage-point fall for advanced nations, according to Seoul's finance ministry. South Korea's consumer inflation is also under upward pressure due to high energy costs and an increase in demand from the economic recovery. The country heavily relies on imports for most of its energy needs.

Consumer prices grew 4.1 percent in March from a year earlier, accelerating from a 3.7 percent on-year gain the previous month. It marked the first time in more than a decade that consumer prices topped 4 percent. The IMF's inflation outlook is higher than the BOK's 3.1 percent estimate. Fitch Ratings expected Korea's consumer prices to rise 4.1 percent this year. The BOK raised the policy rate by a quarter percentage point to 1.5 percent last week, the fourth rate hike since August last year, to tame inflation and curb high household debt. The central bank is widely expected to further tighten monetary policy in the coming months to curb inflation. The BOK aims to keep annual inflation at 2 percent over the medium term. Elevated inflation and snowballing household debt are feared to erode private spending, as they could undermine people's room to spend. South Korea's household credit had come to a record 1,862.1 trillion won (US\$1.5 trillion) as of end-December.

From <https://en.yna.co.kr> 04/19/2022

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## South-East Asia

### **LAOS: Sound Public Financial Management Key to Economic Recovery**

The Lao People's Democratic Republic's (Lao PDR) economy is forecast to grow 3.4% this year and 3.7% in 2023, thanks to the country's investments to boost exports, according to the Asian Development Outlook (ADO) 2022 released by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) today. Sound management of the country's finances will be key to the recovery, which remains fragile and faces headwinds including the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, high inflation, and the impacts of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. "The Lao PDR's economy in 2021 gradually recovered from its worst performance in decades, but new virus variants and rising inflation could derail the momentum," said ADB Country Director for the Lao PDR Sonomi Tanaka. "The government will need to remain vigilant by fully vaccinating as many people as possible and bolstering transparency in public financial management to restore market confidence and attract resilient, sustainable investments."



A second COVID-19 wave in April 2021 forced the government to impose a series of lockdowns, which disrupted economic activity in domestic services, including hotels, restaurants, and transportation. To spur recovery in domestic markets, including tourism, the government in January 2022 relaxed COVID-19 control measures and sped up vaccination. It aims to have 80% of the population fully vaccinated by the end of 2022, compared with 50% as of December 2021. Industrial and agricultural exports contributed to last year's economic recovery. Favorable weather allowed many hydropower plants to operate at full capacity and maximize energy production for exports. Agricultural exports rose across most categories, partly to meet robust demand from the People's Republic of China. Growth in exports will likely continue this year and next, thanks to anticipated investment inflows to support the development of wind, solar, and other low-carbon electricity for the export markets.

Rising oil prices and the depreciation of the kip, which led to 5.3% inflation in December 2021, may push the country's average rate of inflation to 5.8% in 2022 and 5.0% in 2023. Inflation will add to the country's debt distress, which is already at high risk. The report urges the government to boost transparency in the management of external public debt, which will help open doors for the Lao PDR to access sustainable development finance. The ADO 2022 says the country has made solid progress toward achieving its nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement, aimed to achieve net-zero emission, especially in the areas of hydropower development and the expansion of household electrification. The country's policy commitments on forestry, transportation, and renewable energy, however, were "not on track." To correct that, the government has taken steps to secure international investment, though it must first make progress in addressing gaps in climate policy and institutional frameworks, as well as increasing project preparedness.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 04/06/2022

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## **THAILAND: ADB Finances Electric Ferries — First in Southeast Asia**

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Energy Absolute Public Company Ltd. signed a 160 million Thai baht (\$4.7 million equivalent) loan agreement to finance an electric ferry fleet for mass rapid transport in Bangkok—the first such transport system in Southeast Asia. ADB led the structuring of the financing for the 600 million Thai baht project. It includes a \$3.6 million concessional loan from the Clean Technology Fund, which finances the demonstration, deployment, and transfer of low-carbon technologies with significant potential for long-term greenhouse gas emissions savings, as well as investments from the Japan International Cooperation Agency and Export–Import Bank of Thailand. "This project is a fine example of ADB's leadership in climate finance and supporting green technologies that help our



developing member countries meet the Sustainable Development Goals,” said ADB Vice-President for Private Sector Operations and Public–Private Partnerships Ashok Lavasa. “This project demonstrates the potential for electric mobility solutions beyond road vehicles to be adopted across Asia and the Pacific.”

The financing will be used for the E Smart Bangkok Mass Rapid Transit Electric Ferries Project. E Smart Transport Company Ltd., a wholly owned subsidiary of Energy Absolute, will operate 27 e-ferries along the Chao Phraya River in Bangkok. Each ferry can comfortably carry up to 250 passengers per trip. The project will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by an estimated 18,900 tons of carbon dioxide equivalent a year. “Energy Absolute is proud to continue working with ADB as a trusted finance partner to support the expansion of our clean energy and sustainable transport business,” said Energy Absolute Deputy Chief Executive Officer Amorn Saphaweeikul. “This project demonstrates Energy Absolute’s leadership in e-mobility in Thailand and the region, and the potential to use technology developed within the region to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.” Energy Absolute, which was established in 2006, is one of the largest renewable energy companies in Thailand and a pioneer of sustainable transport in the country. ADB supported the company for its maiden green bond issuance in 2019 and its first certified green loan financing in 2020.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 04/27/2022

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## **After 18 Years, Government Hikes Postal Rates**

The Cabinet on Tuesday approved the Digital Economy and Society Ministry’s proposal to raise postal service rates. The ministry said Thailand Post is likely to incur a loss as it had not requested an increase in postal service rates for 18 years despite the increase in operational costs due to inflation. “Citing the data between 2011 and 2020, Thailand Post has a social service burden of up to THB18.38 billion and it is likely to increase further,” the ministry said. Thailand Post made a profit of THB3.82 billion in 2019, but it fell to THB385 million in 2020, and it incurred a loss of THB904 million in 2021. In its 2020 annual report, Thailand Post said the agency has to run more than 5,000 post offices to enable people to access postal services even though some of them generated low revenue.

The revised postal service rates are as follows:

Envelopes (1-2,000 grams):

2022-2024: THB3-55 a piece

2025 onwards: THB4-62 a piece

Postcards:

2022-2024: THB2 a piece

2025 onwards: THB3 a piece

Publications (1-2,000 grams):

2022-2024: THB3-25 a piece

2025 onwards: THB4-33 a piece

Parcels (1-1,000 grams):

2022-2024: THB15-20 a piece

2025 onwards: THB20-25 a piece

Delivery of literature for the blind, weighing not more than 7,000 grams, is still free.

*From <https://www.nationthailand.com/> 04/27/2022*

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## **Việt Nam Expected to Borrow VNĐ2 Quadrillion in 2020-2024**

The Ministry of Finance has recently submitted a plan for public debt management to the Prime Minister, estimating total government debt between 2020 and 2024 at a maximum of VNĐ2 quadrillion (US\$87.6 billion). The borrowed money will come from government bonds, official development assistance (ODA) loans, preferential loans and other sources. It will cover the Central budget deficits of around VNĐ1.3 quadrillion, repay about VNĐ612 trillion of government debt, and allocate approximately VNĐ117 trillion of ODA loans to localities and public units. The Government will need to take out a loan of nearly VNĐ674 trillion in the 2022 fiscal year to cover the Central Budget deficit of VNĐ450 trillion, repay VNĐ196 trillion of government debt, and allocate VNĐ27 trillion of ODA loans. As State Budget deficits are expected to increase by VNĐ240 trillion in 2022 and 2023 to support socio-economic recovery, Việt Nam's public debt is forecast to hit 46-47 per cent of GDP in 2024, and the ratio of government debt to be no more than 24 to 25 per cent of State revenue. Recently, central banks worldwide have raised interest rates and implemented contractionary monetary policies. Notably, the US Federal Reserve has decided to hike its rates for the first time since 2018. Economic expert Cấn Văn Lực was concerned that the moves would have a noticeable impact on the Vietnamese economy from Q4/2022 and create upward pressure on USD/VNĐ exchange rates, increasing the debt burden denominated in USD. Accordingly, he urged the Government to keep a close watch on external debts every time the US Federal Reserve adjusted its rates up and called on the State Bank of Việt Nam to proactively and flexibly manage the foreign exchange market to keep inflation and exchange rates stable.

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 04/08/2022*

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## **NA Agrees to Extend Pilot Resolution on Bad Debt Settlement Until End 2023**

The National Assembly (NA)'s Standing Committee has agreed to extend a pilot resolution on bad debt settlement until the end of 2023 instead of this year. At a meeting on Thursday to consider a Government report on the implementation of NA's Resolution 42/2017/QH14 on piloting bad debt settlement of credit institutions, the

committee agreed to extend the application of the resolution to December 31, 2023. The NA approved Resolution 42 in 2017 which was set to expire on August 15 this year. Therefore, the Government had proposed the NA to extend the pilot resolution until August 15, 2024 before a new law on the issue is completed and ratified. At the meeting, NA Chairman Vương Đình Huệ agreed with the extension, but said the extension should be only until December 31, 2023, when NA's Resolution 43/2022/QH15 on economic stimulus package ends. Huệ noted when extending the application of Resolution 42, the Government must pay attention to goals and solutions as well as streamlining guidance to ensure the adequate and consistent implementation of the resolution. In addition, he said, it was necessary to strengthen coordination between competent agencies and ensure them to take responsibilities in the implementation of the resolution.

NA Deputy Chairman Nguyễn Khắc Định suggested that the Government make specific proposals and orientations for streamlining a legal system on bad debt and collateral settlement. However, Định noted, the Government must consider carefully whether a special policy, such as a law or a resolution on bad debt settlement, is indispensable or just an urgent and temporary solution when the economy faced difficulties with excessive bad debts. "Does it really need a separate law on bad debt and collateral settlement or should the Government study to amend the Law on Credit Institutions and include it in the law," he asked. At the meeting, as being authorised by the Prime Minister, Governor of the State Bank of Việt Nam Nguyễn Thị Hồng reported that after five years of implementing the resolution, the bad debt settlement of credit institutions has achieved positive results. Accordingly, the bad debt ratio of credit institutions was controlled at below 2 per cent. Compared with August 15, 2017 when the resolution started, total bad debts declined by 17.21 per cent at the end of last year. From August 15, 2017 to November 30, 2021, VNĐ373.3 trillion of bad debt was recovered according to Resolution 42. On average, some VNĐ5.67 trillion of bad debts were handled monthly during the application of Resolution 42, against about VNĐ2.14 trillion previously. The Government, therefore, proposed to legislate the policies specified in Resolution 42 into a new law to continually enable the banking industry to settle bad debts of credit institutions. The issuance of a new law on bad debt handling will help credit institutions maintain and accelerate the handling of bad debts to avoid potential risks for the economy, Hồng said.

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn> 04/15/2022*

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## **Long An Gets Approval for \$200 Million Infrastructure Development in Industrial Park**

Deputy Prime Minister Lê Văn Thành has signed a decision approving the building of infrastructure at Prodezi Industrial Park in the Mekong Delta province of Long An. The industrial park will cover 400 hectares in Lương Hòa and Tân Hòa communes in

Bến Lức District and need more than VNĐ4.6 trillion (US\$ nearly 200 million) for infrastructure development. Long An Prodezi JSC is the investor of the project. The lifespan of the project will be 50 years, starting April 23, while the construction must be completed within 60 months after the land is handed over. The provincial People's Committee has directed its Economic Zone Authority (EZA) to guide the investor on project implementation regulations. The EZA was also assigned to coordinate with the investor and relevant agencies in carrying out land reclamation and site clearance as well as developing housing, social and cultural projects for labourers in the park. Employment support and vocation training should be conducted to minimise the impact on people whose land has been revoked for the project.

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 04/25/2022*

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## **VN to Study Property Tax in Comprehensive Tax Reform**

Việt Nam will study the imposition of a tax on homeowners and increase taxes on land to prevent speculation and increase the land-use efficiency, as part of a comprehensive tax reform strategy for 2030 which was approved on April 23. This tax was also mentioned in the Finance Strategy to 2030, approved in March. The proposal about the imposition of an asset tax on second homes emerged recently over worries that real estate speculation is causing the market to overheat. In response to this, the Ministry of Finance denied rumours that it was developing a draft law on property assets, as experts said that it was not the right time as it might hurt the property market and the COVID-hit economy. Under the tax reform strategy, tax on agricultural land would continue to be exempt until 2025 to promote agricultural and rural development. For the tax on non-agricultural land, an increase would be put into consideration. Taxes on homes would also be studied to promote efficiency in using lands and houses, prevent speculation and ensure reasonable revenue to the budget. Another spotlight of the tax reform strategy was giving incentives in corporate income tax to small and micro-sized enterprises. Corporate income tax exemption and reduction incentives would be reviewed and those no longer consistent with the development and integration requirements would be amended or removed.

The tax policies would also aim to attract foreign investment with a focus on quality rather than quantity. The personal income tax would also be reviewed for amendments of tax rates to ensure appropriateness to taxable income and the accordance with the nature of each type of income. Regarding the value-added tax, a roadmap for increases in value-added tax would be studied. The regulation related to tax reduction and tax refund would be reviewed to ensure transparency and consistency with relevant regulations. A roadmap to increase the special consumption tax on tobacco, beer and alcohol would also be put into consideration. For export and import tax, the number of tax rates would be reduced to simplify the import-export tariffs, from currently 32 to 25 in 2025 and 20 in 2030. In addition, the

import and export tax policies would also promote exports, increase domestic added value and limit the export of raw materials and resources. Appropriate tax incentives would be raised to promote the development of spearhead industries, and part-supply industries and prioritise sectors to ensure compliance with the country's socio-economic development orientations in each period. The tax policies on natural resources and environmental protection would also be reviewed under the reform strategy. In the 2021-25 period, the tax policies would focus on providing support to enterprises and residents to overcome difficulties and recover business and production after the COVID-19 pandemic. The strategy aimed to build a modern, streamlined, transparent and efficient tax management system together with the application of information technology and administrative procedures simplification to reduce compliance costs for enterprises and residents.

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 04/27/2022*

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## **VN's Digital Economy Revenue Reaches \$53 Billion in the First Quarter**

Việt Nam's digital economy revenue reached US\$53 billion in the first quarter of this year. The data was revealed by the Ministry of Information and Communications at a meeting held by the National Committee on Digital Transformation on Wednesday morning. The ministry's report at the meeting said the contribution of the digital economy to Việt Nam's economy has been increasing. According to the ministry, the digital economy consists of information communication technology (ICT) digital economy, Internet digital economy, and the digital economy of industries. The Internet digital economy has a growth rate of 28 per cent, reaching \$8 billion USD in revenue while the ICT digital economy and digital economy of industries have an average revenue growth rate of about 15 per cent each in the first quarter of this year. In the meantime, the number of newly-established digital technology enterprises by the end of February 2022 reached 65,329, an increase of 487 enterprises compared to 2021.

The National Public Service Portal has integrated 3,552 online public services, creating favourable conditions for people and businesses. In the first quarter of this year, the portal has received the registration of more than 167,000 accounts; synchronised over 14 million records and 163,000 online payment transactions worth VNĐ366 billion (US\$15.9 million). The electronic invoice system has been deployed nationwide. The tax authority has received and processed 77.7 million e-invoices in the first quarter of this year. The report also revealed that human resource training for digital transformation has been paid more attention. Nearly 1,000 officials and civil servants have been trained during the first quarter of this year. It is planned that about 10,000 officials and civil servants will be trained by October. Regarding digital infrastructure, the speed of broadband network access in Việt Nam in the first quarter of this year has been improved compared to the same period last year, especially,

the download index in mobile broadband increased by about 26 per cent, and the download index in the fixed broadband increased by 44 per cent. The Ministry of Public Security has coordinated with relevant ministries to deploy a national database on the population with information of nearly 78 million citizens and over 133 million COVID-19 vaccinations. The national civil status e-database has about 23 million birth registrations, including over 7 million children that have been assigned personal identification numbers according to regulations; over 4.5 million marriages and more than 3.2 million death have also been registered. The digitisation rate of businesses documents reached 100 per cent in the national database of business registration.

### **PM's directions**

Prime Minister Phạm Minh Chính, head of the committee, said at an earlier meeting that “Digital transformation is a driving force for innovation and the foundation for a modern economy.” Therefore, the committee’s future workload is very heavy, he said. It needs to implement mechanisms and policies to promote the process of national digital transformation, closely linking with administrative reform; developing e-Government, digital economy, digital society, and smart city; facilitating the implementation of the fourth Industrial Revolution associated with the sustainable socio-economic development as well as development goals by 2025, 2030 and 2045, he said. He also pointed out several tasks that the committee must focus on, including perfecting the digital institution; developing digital transformation infrastructure, applying digital technology; mobilising resources through the promotion of public-private co-operation; improving the management capacity and the quality of human resources. Investment in digital transformation must have a focus as both time and funds are limited, he said.

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 04/28/2022*

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## **Country Records Import-Export Turnover at \$242 Billion, \$2.53 Billion Trade Surplus**

Việt Nam's import-export turnover during the first four months of 2022 reached over US\$242 billion, of which exports totalled \$122.3 billion and imports \$119.8 billion, resulting in a trade surplus of \$2.53 billion, according to the latest report released yesterday from the General Statistics Office of Vietnam (GSO). The four first months of the year have seen the Southeast Asian country's exports increase by 16.4 per cent and imports by 15.7 per cent. The \$2.53 billion trade surplus recorded for the period was a marked improvement over the same period last year at \$1.5 billion. GSO's report said Việt Nam's turnover for the month of April stood at \$65.4 billion, a 2.9 per cent decrease compared to March but a 20 per cent increase compared to the same period last year. Exports were reported to expand by 25 per cent with the domestic sector's growth at 20.5 per cent and foreign at 26.6 per cent. Imports fell 1.5 per cent from March to nearly \$32.2 billion, of which the domestic sector imported

\$11.02 billion and foreign \$21.17 billion. The country recorded 22 commodities with export values exceeding \$1 billion, with six at over \$5 billion in the first four months of 2022. Together they accounted for nearly 87 per cent of the country's total export, of which industrial manufacturing was 89 per cent (0.5 per cent decrease from the same period last year), seafood 2.9 per cent (0.6 per cent increase), energy and minerals accounted for 1.3 per cent (0.4 per cent increase).

Meanwhile, imports turnover reached \$119.83 billion, a 15.7 per cent increase year-on-year with the domestic sector accounting for \$40.97 billion and foreign \$78.86 billion, a 16.4 per cent increase. The country's imports were made up mostly of input materials (93.9 per cent) including tools and machinery, raw materials and consumer goods. The US remained Việt Nam's largest export market with an estimated turnover of \$35.7 billion, while China was the largest import market with \$37.1 billion in the first four months of 2022. The country recorded a trade surplus of \$10.4 billion, a 36.4 per cent increase year-on-year while recorded trade deficits of \$18 billion with China (2 per cent increase), \$15.2 billion with South Korea (58.3 per cent increase), \$5.8 billion with the ASEAN bloc (15.4 per cent increase) and 0.79 billion with Japan (57.7 per cent increase).

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 04/30/2022*

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## South Asia

### **INDIA: Global Cloud Infrastructure Spending to Achieve \$90 bn in 2022**

The global cloud infrastructure spending is set to reach \$90 billion in 2022 -- a 21.7 per cent growth compared to 2021, while non-cloud infrastructure is expected to decline slightly, down 0.3 per cent to \$59.4 billion, according to an IDC report. In 2021, the cloud infrastructure spending reached \$73.9 billion, up 8.8 per cent over 2020. In Q4 2021, it increased 13.5 per cent (year over year) to reach \$21.1 billion. This marked the second consecutive quarter of year-over-year growth as supply chain constraints have depleted vendor inventories over the past several quarters. "As backlogs continue to grow, pent-up demand bodes well for future growth as long as the economy stays healthy, and supply catches up to demand," said the IDC. Spending on shared cloud infrastructure reached \$14.4 billion in the fourth quarter of 2021, increasing 13.9 per cent compared to a year ago, and grew to \$51.4 billion for 2021, an increase of 7.5 per cent. IDC expects to see continuously strong demand for shared cloud infrastructure with spending expected to surpass non-cloud infrastructure spending in 2022. In 2022, shared cloud infrastructure spending is expected to grow 25.5 per cent (on-year) to total \$64.5 billion while spending on dedicated cloud infrastructure is expected to grow 13.1 per cent to reach \$25.4 billion in 2022. At the regional level, year-over-year spending on cloud infrastructure in Q4 2021 increased in most regions. Asia/Pacific (excluding Japan and China) grew the



most at 59.5 per cent. Japan grew in the high single digits, while Western Europe grew in the low single digits. Long term, IDC expects spending on compute and storage cloud infrastructure to have a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 12.6 per cent over the 2021-2026 forecast period, reaching \$133.7 billion in 2026 and accounting for 68.6 per cent of total compute and storage infrastructure spend.

From <https://news.siliconindia.com> 04/04/2022

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## **ADB Financing to Support Urban Development Project in Nagaland**

The Government of India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) today signed a \$2 million Project Readiness Financing (PRF) loan for designing climate-resilient urban infrastructure, strengthening institutional capacity, and improving municipal resource mobilization in 16 district headquarter towns (DHTs) in Nagaland. The signatories to the PRF for the proposed Nagaland Urban Infrastructure Development Project were Ministry of Finance's Department of Economic Affairs Additional Secretary Rajat Kumar Mishra and ADB Country Director for India Takeo Konishi. After signing the agreement, Mr. Mishra said that the facility would support key preparatory activities for the ensuing project aimed at improving urban infrastructure and services in Nagaland to help the state realize its economic potential. He said that the Government of India is committed to the development of the northeast region. "The ADB financing will ensure high readiness of the ensuing project through preparing an urban sector strategy, undertaking feasibility studies and detailed engineering designs of selected subprojects, and building capacity of state-level agencies in project implementation, resource mobilization, and anchoring reforms," said Mr. Konishi.

Nagaland's towns and cities face the long-term challenges of climate change, lack of basic amenities, and poor connectivity. Major transport routes around urban areas are severely affected by landslides during the monsoon season. Urban roads are in poor condition without proper stormwater drainage. Most cities face acute water shortage and, except Dimapur, have inadequate sewerage or septage management system. All these issues constrain the economic development of the state. The PRF loan will help design water supply, sanitation, solid waste management and urban roads in 16 DHTs with climate-resilient features and improved access to the poor and vulnerable. Capacity building of state agencies will help augment own-resource mobilization by urban local bodies, improve their readiness for implementing the ensuing project, and initiate sector and institutional reforms.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 04/11/2022

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## **SRI LANKA: Harsha Wants a Complete Overhaul of Central Bank Monetary Board**



Basic economic theory states that the main factor determining the efficiency of a market is confidence and with this, in mind, this government is clearly unable to manage the economy any further, Opposition Parliamentarian Harsha de Silva said. Speaking at a press briefing he said that the public confidence, as well as international investor confidence in this government, has completely fallen and as a result markets have frozen. "We appeal to the government to present the IMF letter, as it will regain some lost investor confidence by displaying a willingness to work with the IMF and in implementing a sustainable plan," he said. According to him, there are a few changes that the government ought to implement immediately; beginning with the complete overhaul of the monetary board. "We are facing this current crisis, as a result of ill decisions made by the monetary board. The manner in which they floated the rupee was completely wrong. The Finance Minister, Basil Rajapaksa stated that they were a hold of the final IMF Article IV report, however, they seem to have missed the second page. One of the main suggestions on the second page states that the devaluing of the rupee should happen gradually. Thereafter, "transition should be carefully sequenced and implemented as part of a comprehensive macro-economic adjustment package". He said that the CBSL's forced conversion of remittances is completely regressive and needs to be scrapped. "They floated the rupee while the forced conversion rate was at 25%, however, when they witnessed remittances flowing through the banking system again, they further increased the rate to 50%. As a result of these unsustainable conversions, banks now have insufficient forex to conduct their business. The banks pay our import bills, whether it is for fuel, medicine, potatoes, or LPG, not the CBSL. Therefore, it is crucial that the banks have sufficient dollars to purchase goods, as well as prevent further depreciation of the rupee. We can neither comprehend these absurd policies, nor will we stand for them, and the government needs to immediately withdraw this gazette," he emphasized.

"Furthermore, the Article IV report highlights the importance of observing the economy as one coherent system, in which we have to look at all variables when implementing reforms, as opposed to just one variable. It is of utmost importance that we further increase the policy interest rates, as an increase from 6.5 % to 7.5% is wholly insufficient! Take for example, yesterday at the treasury bond auction, the government did not approve any of the bids submitted by the market, thus they had to print the equivalent for funding. The Central Bank states the reluctance to approve any bids is a result of all bids being made for an interest rate above 15.5%. However, what the CBSL fails to understand is that no one wants a negative interest on their investment. Thus, when inflation is at 17.5 %, who in their right mind would invest in anything for an interest rate below 17.5%? All investors strive to achieve an interest rate above the inflation rate so that they can reap a good return on their investment. This is why we urge the government to increase the policy interest rates in line with the rate of inflation and completely abandon the excessive printing of money." "Additionally, the process of debt-restructuring needs to start as soon as possible.

Our creditors have already hired top law firms such as White & Case LLP to advise them on debt negotiations and plan to take us to courts. However, we are yet to hire a law firm to represent us. We urgently need to hire appropriate lawyers, although I urge the government not to see this as an opportunity to steal more. In the recent past, we witnessed the current Governor of the Central Bank engage in shady deals, with characters such as Imaad Zuberi, amounting to \$6.5 million. Since then Zuberi has been convicted and sentenced to imprisonment on multiple counts of financial fraud in the United States. It was also later revealed that over \$5.6 million of our taxpayers' money went to the benefit of Zuberi and his spouse. Moreover, it is critical that we temporarily halt interest payments on International Sovereign Bonds (ISB), as a first step in the process of debt-restructuring.”

“Yesterday, I met a group of fund managers representing various bondholders. It was inconceivable to me when one fund manager revealed that he met with President Gotabaya Rajapaksa. It is completely improper that the President would allocate time for fund managers. Instead, we need to be represented by a team of experts on sovereign-debt restructuring and not the President of Sri Lanka. The President neither has the necessary capacity nor the capability to restructure bonds, which is why we urge the government to hand over the sovereign-debt restructuring negotiations to professionals.” “Lastly, we hear that the government is to amend the previous expenditure and revenue and present a new budget. If so, the government needs to clearly state how they will reduce expenditure while increasing revenue in order to regain some sort of market confidence. The public is in complete disarray today, as queues for fuel and gas extend over kilometers , and people continue to suffer from power cuts that last as long as 13 hours, putting both businesses and peoples' livelihoods in jeopardy. We strongly urge the government to implement necessary changes and reforms so that we can carve a clear and sustainable path to get Sri Lanka out of this mess, which is largely due to bad governance. We will continue to provide constructive criticism and suggestions to the best of our abilities, as we need to salvage this country for future generations.”

From <https://www.lankabusinessonline.com> 04/01/2022

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## **Central Bank Significantly Tightens Its Monetary Policy; Decides to Increase SDFR & SLFR by 700bps**

The Monetary Board of the Central Bank at its meeting held today has decided to increase the Standing Deposit Facility Rate (SDFR) and the Standing Lending Facility Rate (SLFR) of the Central Bank by 700 basis points to 13.50 percent and 14.50 percent, respectively. The Board, having noted the inflationary pressures that could further intensify in the period ahead, driven by the build-up of aggregate demand, domestic supply disruptions, exchange rate depreciation and the elevated prices of commodities globally, was of the view that a substantial policy response is imperative to arrest the buildup of added demand driven inflationary pressures in the

economy and preempt the escalation of adverse inflationary expectations, to provide the required impetus to stabilise the exchange rate and also to correct anomalies observed in the market interest rate structure.

From <https://www.lankabusinessonline.com> 04/08/2022

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## Central-West Asia

### **AZERBAIJAN: Central Bank Talks Projects for Development of Insurance Market**

The Central Bank of Azerbaijan (CBA) is implementing a number of projects in the development of the insurance market, Director of the Department for Control over Insurance Activities of the CBA Vusal Gurbanov, told Trend. According to him, one of these projects is to ensure the availability of insurance services and improve the quality of services provided. "Implementation of the project for the digitalization of both compulsory and voluntary types of insurance will make it possible to receive insurance services in electronic form, and also, online apply for compensation in the case of an insured event. This will help increase the efficiency of the services provided and prompt response in the case of an insured event," he said. For the implementation of these projects, the CBA has prepared a relevant bill - both a legal framework and a platform for controlling electronic systems, Gurbanov added.

From <https://en.trend.az/> 04/03/2022

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### **Azerbaijan to Simplify Tax Obligations**

Azerbaijan plans to simplify the fulfillment of tax obligations by small and medium-sized businesses and the provision of tax reporting, Head of the State Tax Service under the Ministry of Economy of Azerbaijan Orkhan Nazarli, said at a meeting with members of the Ministry's Public Council, Trend reports. "The availability of modern digital tools and analytical potential will expand plans for the implementation of digital solutions in the field of taxpayer services. We have been using digital tools in recent years that allow us to analyze and determine the level of risk in taxpayer transactions. Special attention is paid to the process of digitalization of tax administration," Nazarli said.

From <https://en.trend.az/> 04/04/2022

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### **Azerbaijan Reveals Data on Number of Active Taxpayers**

BAKU, Azerbaijan, April 14. The number of active taxpayers in Azerbaijan amounted to 683,231 as of April 1 2022 and increased by 2.7 percent by comparison with the beginning of 2022, State Tax Service under the Ministry of the Economy told Trend.

The number of active payers of VAT increased by 3.2 percent for the reporting period and amounted to 35,807, State Tax Service said. The number of business entities increased by 0.7 percent by comparison with the beginning of the year and amounted to 184,610.

From <https://en.trend.az/> 04/14/2022

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## **Azerbaijan Reveals Its External Public Debt's Ratio to GDP**

BAKU, Azerbaijan, April 16. Azerbaijan's external public debt amounted to \$7.4 billion, or 12.5 percent of GDP as of early April 2022, Azer Mursagulov, director of the Agency for Managing Public Debt and Financial Obligations under the Azerbaijani Finance Ministry, said, Trend reports. According to Mursagulov, Azerbaijan's domestic public debt amounted to 2.6 billion manat (\$1.53 billion), or 2.6 percent of GDP. "The indicator of external debt is relatively lower than in other countries of our region. Besides, the ratio of Azerbaijan's total public debt to GDP is 15.1 percent," he said. "The cost of state guarantees provided by Azerbaijan is 1.8 billion manat (\$1.06 billion), or 1.6 percent of GDP. Thus, the ratio of public debt to GDP is a little less than 17 percent". The agency's head also noted that the public debt funds are formed at the expense of long-term loans issued by international financial organizations. The average maturity of these loans amounts to seven-eight years (nearly two years for domestic debt). Mursagulov stressed that the public debt of the countries of the world increased from nearly \$85 trillion to \$93 trillion over the year.

From <https://en.trend.az/> 04/16/2022

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## **Azerbaijan's Central Bank Considering Introduction of New Financial Instruments**

The Central Bank of Azerbaijan (CBA) is considering introduction of new financial instruments in the country, Chairman of the Board of the CBA Taleh Kazimov said at a press conference on April 29, Trend reports. "The bank is aimed at developing the money market in the short-to-medium term. Implementing new financial instruments are currently being reviewed. The CBA is striving to ensure the profitability of the Azerbaijani manat," Kazimov said.

From <https://en.trend.az/> 04/29/2022

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## **PALESTINIA: US\$2.4 Million to Maximize the Economic Impact of Community-Based Tourism in Rural Communities in the West Bank**

A grant of US\$2.4 million from the Japan Social Development Fund (JSDF) will help

increase economic opportunities and improve the livelihoods of Palestinians in fragile communities along the Palestinian Heritage Trail across the West Bank. The World Bank project will focus on providing economic opportunities for women and youth in the community-based tourism businesses. The new World Bank project will help maximize the economic impact of community-based tourism as a development tool in marginalized communities, connecting the Palestinian identity, history, people, tradition, and culture and reaching out to women and youth. “We welcome Japan’s support to community-based tourism. Building on the success of previous intervention, the Palestinian Heritage Trail will strengthen the connections between communities and the private sector. Not only will visitors experience the beauty of the cultural trail and the amazing diversity of landscapes, but the new grant will also help promote the economic and social self-reliance of vulnerable communities and households,” said Kanthan Shankar, World Bank Country Director for West Bank and Gaza.

The Palestinian territories have faced long-lasting instability, exacerbating macroeconomic volatility, and increasing unemployment for over a quarter of the population. Job losses affected vulnerable groups with higher-than-average unemployment rates, reaching 41 percent for women (compared to 21 percent among men) and 40 percent for youth. While tourism activities constituted 2.5 percent of the GDP in 2018, it was one of the first and hardest hit sectors by COVID-19. The sector lost more than US\$1 billion in revenues since the start of the pandemic. In the West Bank, the pandemic has particularly affected geographic areas with a higher density of marginalized people, some of which are living below the poverty line.

“Programs that target specific geographic areas and focus on marginalized people are critical to achieve rapid growth and inclusive job creation and mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the West Bank. I strongly believe that enhancing tourism sector will be an important element for the recovery of the Palestinian economy. In this connection, Japan has promoted “Corridor for Tourism” project including the newly constructed shelter for Hisham’s Palace in Jericho, which will not only contribute to regional cooperation in the tourism sector, but also attract many tourists within the region including Palestine,” said Masayuki Magoshi, Ambassador of Japan for Palestinian Affairs. Tourism focused on nature hikes and walks is resilient and able to rebound quickly in post-shock situations. In the Palestinian case, the number of domestic tourists on the trails increased even amid fragile and violent circumstances and major shocks, offering residents the opportunity to participate in healthy and safe activities. The project that will be implemented by the Palestinian Heritage Trail will leverage the existing community-based tourism network to support vulnerable communities, including households, micro and small businesses, and daily-wage workers. It will do this by first reconnecting them to the domestic market and then to international markets, as appropriate.

*From <https://www.worldbank.org/> 04/04/2022*

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## **TURKMENISTAN: IMF to Support in Conducting Economic Reforms**

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) intends to provide technical assistance to Turkmenistan in conducting out budget reform and revision of the tax system, Trend reports citing Orient news. This was stated by Director of the Middle East and Central Asia Department of the IMF Jihad Azour at an online meeting with the Minister of Finance and Economy of Turkmenistan Mukhammetgeldi Serdarov and Deputy Chairman of the Central Bank Merdan Palivanov. During the conversation held within the framework of the annual meetings of the IMF and the World Bank, Serdarov informed the head of the IMF Department about the development of the national financial system, the efforts being made to ensure food security and maintain a stable economic situation in the country. The deputy head of the Central Bank of Turkmenistan expressed hope that cooperation with the IMF will continue to strengthen, as well as technical support will be provided in regulating monetary policy, improving national accounting system and calculating macroeconomic indicators in accordance with international standards. Following the meeting, the IMF representative noted that joint work in this direction should contribute to the realization of Turkmenistan's huge resource potential.

From <https://en.trend.az/> 04/27/2022

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## **Turkmenistan Increases Volume of Loans Issued to Economic Entities**

The volume of loans issued by credit institutions of Turkmenistan to enterprises, organizations, and citizens amounted to 79.45 billion Turkmen manats (\$22.7 billion), as of March 1, 2022, which is 11.3 percent more than in the reporting period 2021 (71.36 billion Turkmen manats - \$20.38 billion), Trend reports citing Business Turkmenistan news agency. The total amount of loans issued to citizens and non-state entrepreneurs amounted to 15.88 billion Turkmen manats (\$4.54 billion) as of March 1, 2022, which is 21.2 percent more than in the same period of 2021 (13.10 billion Turkmen manats - \$3.74 billion). From January through February 2022, the total volume of cashless circulation of bank cards in Turkmenistan amounted to 1.71 billion Turkmen manats (\$489.7 million). In general, the country's financial sector is constantly expanding. In particular, mobile applications are being introduced to pay for various services and goods, the number of non-cash payments is increasing, and payment for goods and services is being implemented through banking terminals.

From <https://en.trend.az/> 04/28/2022

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## **UZBEKISTAN: To Reduce Income Tax Rate for Foreign Citizens to 12%**

The income tax rate for foreign nationals in Uzbekistan will be reduced. The relevant presidential decree was adopted, Trend reports citing Kun.uz. According to the decree, from May 1, 2022, the income tax on income of nonresidents from sources in Uzbekistan will be set at 12% (previously up to 20%). Also, from July 1, 2022, exemptions from customs duties will be granted only by law. In addition, the amount of real estate required to obtain a residence permit in Uzbekistan on the condition of purchase of real estate by foreign citizens has been reduced from \$400,000 to the equivalent of \$300,000 in Tashkent region and Tashkent city.

From <https://en.trend.az/> 04/10/2022

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## **Uzbek Central Bank Publishes Data on Purchase of Foreign Currency for 3M2022**

BAKU, Azerbaijan, April 26. The Central Bank of Uzbekistan published data on the number of remittances and the purchase of foreign currency from January through March 2022, Trend reports via the bank. The volume of remittances from abroad to Uzbekistan amounted to \$1.47 billion in the first quarter of 2022. This is \$49 million or 3 percent more than in the same period last year. Commercial banks of Uzbekistan bought \$2.11 billion from individuals in the first quarter of 2022, which is an increase of \$585 million or 38 percent compared to the same period of 2021. At the same time, banks sold \$1.73 billion to individuals, which is an increase of \$709 million or 69 percent compared to the first quarter of 2021. To date, in commercial banks for individuals operate such international transfer systems as Zolotaya Korona, Western Union, Contact, MoneyGram, MiGom, Unistream, RIA Money Transfer, Asia-Express, Intel Express, UPT.

From <https://en.trend.az/> 04/26/2022

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## **YEMEN: New World Bank Group Country Engagement Note to Support the People and Preserve the Institutions That Serve Them**

The World Bank Group's Board of Executive Directors today endorsed a new two-year Country Engagement Note (CEN) for Yemen. The World Bank Group's overarching goal is to support the people of Yemen and preserve the institutions that serve them. The WBG will stay engaged in Yemen across multiple possible scenarios, with a focus on: (i) basic service delivery and human capital; and (ii) food security, resilience, and livelihood opportunities. At the heart of the humanitarian-development nexus, institutional preservation will remain a fundamental objective of the IDA program across the two tracks. "Our \$2.8bn

program reflects the World Bank's investment in preserving Yemen's development assets, and our hope for a better future for a generation of young Yemenis who have grown up in the shadow of war but will play a key role in the recovery" said Tania Meyer, Country Manager for Yemen. "By increasing our support at this critical juncture, we are affirming our unwavering commitment to the people of Yemen and the institutions that serve them".

The World Bank Group's engagement in Yemen since 2016 has influenced wider Bank policy on FCV and helped to define a model for engagement during active conflict. It informed the decision to create the Remaining Engaged during Conflict Allocation (RECA), an acknowledgment that IDA can deliver results at scale in conflict settings, preserving institutions, service delivery and human capital through partnerships with UN agencies and local institutions. The war in Ukraine, one of the world's breadbaskets, is already having a significant impact on food prices worldwide. The CEN recognizes that with a worsening food crisis and widespread malnutrition in Yemen, short-term interventions alone cannot provide sustainable solutions. To help break the cycle of aid dependency, the World Bank will pilot a "continuum of support" approach that bundles short-term and resilience-building interventions in geographical areas where food insecurity is the highest.

The World Bank recognizes the critical role of the private sector in Yemen's resilience and growth prospects. The new strategy was prepared by the three parts of the Bank Group—the World Bank, the International Finance Corporation, and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency. Together, they will redouble efforts to promote private sector-led solutions to fill infrastructure gaps, support job creation, and lay the groundwork for recovery. Since re-engaging in Yemen in 2016, the World Bank has supported the Yemeni people through a large country-wide, grant-based program totaling US\$2.8 billion. In addition to funding, the World Bank provides technical expertise to design projects and guide their implementation by building strong partnerships with UN agencies and local institutions with working capacity on the ground.

From <https://www.worldbank.org/> 04/14/2022

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## Oceania

### **AUSTRALIA: Signing Major Billion Dollar Trade Deal with India**

Australia will sign an historic trade deal with India on Saturday following years of negotiations between the two nations. The deal will see tariffs eliminated on more than 85 per cent of Australian good exported to India, currently worth more than \$12 billion a year. Meanwhile, 96 per cent of Indian goods entering Australia will be duty-free. The deal will be signed by Trade Minister Dan Tehan and his Indian counterpart Piyush Goyal in a virtual ceremony. Prime Minister Scott Morrison said



the deal would help to secure more opportunities for Australian producers with the country's seventh-largest trading partner. "This agreement opens a big door into the world's fastest growing major economy for Australian farmers, manufacturers, producers and so many more," Mr Morrison said. "By unlocking the huge market of around 1.4 billion consumers in India, we are strengthening the economy and growing jobs right here at home."

Two-way trade between Australia and India is currently valued at more than \$24 billion. Negotiations on the Australian-India economic cooperation and trade agreement had been ongoing for more than a decade, with the first round of talks between the countries taking place in 2011. As part of the deal, tariffs on products such as sheep meat and wool will be eliminated straight away, while tariffs for products like avocados, onions, nuts and fruits will be phased out over the next seven years. Tariffs on wine will also be reduced, while the resources sector will see tariffs on products like coal and metallic ores eliminated on entry. "This is great news for lobster fishers in Tasmania, wine producers in South Australia, macadamia farmers in Queensland, critical minerals miners in Western Australia," Mr Morrison said. "This agreement has been built on our strong security partnership and our joint efforts in the Quad, which has created the opportunity for our economic relationship to advance to a new level."

The trade deal is also set to benefit the education and tourism sectors. Both countries will recognise professional qualifications, licensing and registration procedures. Australian services suppliers across more than 30 sectors will be assured to receive the best treatment by India in relation to any other trade deal India enters into. Indian residents will also have new access to working holidays in Australia, having 1000 places set aside, with the federal government having two years to implement the measure. Trade Minister Dan Tehan said the deal would strengthen the relationship between the two countries. "It will create new opportunities for jobs and businesses in both countries, while laying the foundations for a full free trade agreement," Mr Tehan said. "This agreement will turbocharge our close, long-standing and highly complementary economic relationship in areas such as critical minerals, professional services, education and tourism."

From <https://7news.com.au> 04/02/2022

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## **Australian Capitals Begin to See Benefit of Fuel Excise Cuts as Petrol Price Plummets**

Australians should be noticing long-awaited relief at the petrol bowser, the consumer watchdog says, after the fuel excise was slashed in last week's budget. The ACCC on Wednesday said that, depending on where you lived, petrol fell as much as 35 cents per litre between March 29 and April 5. Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane motorists should have seen between a 25 and 27 cents per litre dip in the same time

period. Those in Adelaide should see a 31 cents per litre decline, while those in Perth saw the 35 cents per litre drop. “Over the next weeks, as petrol stations use up their stocks of fuel on which the higher excise had already been paid, we expect the reduced wholesale price to be passed through at the bowser everywhere,” ACCC Chair Gina Cass-Gottlieb said.

“Despite the various factors impacting the fuel price, our analysis indicates that clearly a major part of the reduction in excise has already been passed through in the major capital cities.” The tax, usually 44.2 cents per litre, was slashed in half from midnight last Tuesday. “This cut in fuel excise, which takes effect from midnight tonight, will flow through to the bowser over the next two weeks,” Treasurer Josh Frydenberg said in his budget speech. “The competition watchdog will monitor retailers to make sure these savings are passed on in full. “This temporary reduction in fuel excise will not come at a cost to road funding, which will see more than \$12 billion spent in the coming year.” Diesel is also beginning to drop in cost, the ACCC, but not as quickly or significantly as petrol. “It will take some time for petrol stations with lower turnover to use up existing stocks of petrol and diesel, and restock with fuel at the reduced wholesale price that takes account of the excise cut,” Cass-Gottlieb said. The price of petrol was rising in the lead-up to the war in Ukraine, but skyrocketed once the conflict began. The average price of petrol on February 20, four days before the invasion of Ukraine, was 179.1 cents per litre, according to the Australian Institute of Petroleum. Five weeks later, on March 27, it was 206.7 cents per litre. Addressing that issue and the rising cost of living were key measures in Frydenberg’s budget last week.

From <https://7news.com.au> 04/06/2022

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## **Australia’s Inflation Rate Jumps to 5.1 Per Cent as RBA Ponders Cash Rate Hike**

Australia’s inflation rate has jumped to its worst result in more than two decades, spurred on by soaring petrol prices and higher dwelling construction costs. The rate of the rise could force the Reserve Bank of Australia’s hand in hiking the cash rate from its record low of 0.1 per cent. The Australian Bureau of Statistics on Wednesday announced its quarterly Consumer Price Index (CPI) figures. Its headline figure, the annual inflation rate, jumped to 5.1 per cent after a 2.1 per cent quarter. ABS Head of Prices Statistics Michelle Marquardt said it was the largest quarterly increase since the introduction of the goods and services tax in 2000. Annually, the CPI rose 5.1 per cent with new dwellings, increasing 13.7 per cent, and fuel, rising 35.1 per cent, the most significant contributors.

“Continued shortages of building supplies and labour, heightened freight costs and ongoing strong demand contributed to price rises for newly built dwellings,” Marquardt said. “Fewer grant payments made this quarter from the federal

government's HomeBuilder program and similar state-based housing construction programs also contributed to the rise. "The CPI's automotive fuel series reached a record level for the third consecutive quarter, with fuel price rises seen across all three months of the March quarter." Underlying inflation - which smooths out volatile price swings and is more crucial to the interest rate outlook - jumped 1.4 per cent to 3.7 per cent for the year. Treasurer Josh Frydenberg was quick to blame the latest inflation surge on international factors, particularly a further 11 per cent quarterly rise in fuel costs to be 35 per cent higher over the year.

"This is the single, biggest increase in fuel prices since Iraq's invasion of Kuwait more than 30 years ago in 1990," he told reporters in Melbourne. "Australia is not immune from the international pressures driving up inflation. "The war in Ukraine has seen a spike in fuel prices, gas prices and commodity prices being felt here at home." Consumers also paid more for their food, with a 2.8 per cent rise reflected in the ABS data. That reflects higher transport, fertiliser, packaging and ingredient costs, as well as COVID-related disruptions. The main contributor to the rise was a 6.6 per cent jump in the price of vegetables, waters, soft drinks and juices up by 5.6 per cent, fruit up by 4.9 per cent and beef up 7.6 per cent. Maquardt said the blow was softened by meal voucher programs in Australia's two biggest cities. "The rise for the food group was softened by voucher programs in Sydney and Melbourne, which reduced out-of-pocket costs for meals out and takeaway foods," she said.

"The grocery component of the group, which excludes meals out and takeaway foods, rose 4.0 per cent in the March quarter." Shadow treasurer Jim Chalmers said the blame laid with the Prime Minister. "Under Scott Morrison, the costs of living are skyrocketing while real wages are going backwards – and interest rate rises are about to add to the pain," he said. Attention now turns to the RBA, which will consider whether there will be a cash rate hike, which currently sits at 0.1 per cent. The RBA has previously said it wants to see a meaningful rise in wages before it takes action, and could be wary of moving during a federal election campaign. But economists now argue global inflation is on the move, and so are other central banks, making the case for a move by the RBA sooner rather than later. "A record low cash rate of 0.1 per cent is clearly now no longer appropriate for this economy, meaning the Reserve Bank must join other central banks around the world and tighten monetary policy," EY chief economist Cherrille Murphy said. "To not do so risks the RBA losing credibility." The RBA will reveal its decision next week.

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## **Cost of Living Becomes Focal Point of Campaign as ABS Prepares to Release Inflation Statistics**

Balancing the household budget is quickly becoming one of the most prominent issues in this year's upcoming federal election. The first of two significant

cost-of-living relief measures, a \$250 payment for vulnerable Australians, began rolling out on Wednesday. Some 6 million people, including pensioners, carers, veterans, and job seekers, will receive the financial package automatically. At tax time, low- and middle-income earners will receive a one-off \$420 offset, also intended to combat the rising cost of living. The latest inflation figures were released on Wednesday, showing a spike not seen for two decades. Treasurer Josh Frydenberg said the government's response to global issues placing pressure on households, including the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, was targeted and responsible.

"Labor has no plans to help families with cost-of-living pressures," he said. Shadow treasurer Jim Chalmers told AAP that under the Morrison government everything was going up except Australians' wages, with interest rates about to be part of the pain. "A better future relies on a stronger, broader, more inclusive, and more sustainable economy - powered by cleaner and cheaper energy, a bigger and better-trained workforce, and key investments in the care economy, digital economy, and a future made in Australia," Chalmers said. The Coalition is pledging to create 450,000 more jobs in regional Australia over the next five years. Prime Minister Scott Morrison will announce details of the plan on Wednesday, as Labor and the government are set to again clash over rising cost-of-living pressures, with the latest figures due to be released.

Morrison said in a statement the jobs commitment to regional Australia was part of a pledge to create 1.3 million more jobs over the next five years, with more than one in three of those jobs to be in the regions. "Only the Coalition has a plan for 450,000 new jobs in the regions and runs on the board to deliver them," he said. "Since we were elected, we have created over 1.9 million new jobs, and our unemployment rate is down to 4 per cent, the equal lowest level in 48 years, and forecast to fall further," the prime minister said. Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce said the Coalition government's Energy Security and Regional Development plan would boost regional income and "create jobs for years to come". Labor has been scathing of the government's handling of relations with Pacific countries, especially its response to a security pact signed between the Solomon Islands and China. On Tuesday it announced a major package of diplomatic and development initiatives for the region, as well as further defence partnerships. Labor's campaigning day is expected to start in Sydney.

From <https://7news.com.au> 04/28/2022

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## **NEW ZEALAND: Accounts Reflect Resilient Economy amid Omicron**

The resilience of the economy has continued to be reflected in the Crown's accounts, though the full effects of the Omicron outbreak have yet to show up in the books

which reinforces the need for balanced financial management, Grant Robertson said. The Crown Accounts for the eight months to the end of February were better than forecast in December's Half Year Economic and Fiscal Update (HYEFU). The Operating Balance before Gains and Losses (OBEGAL) deficit was \$8.3 billion, \$4.4 billion below that forecast in HYEFU. Tax revenue was \$1.8 billion above forecast at \$68 billion, due to better-than-expected corporate profits and a strong jobs market. Core Crown expenses were \$84.4 billion, \$1.4 billion less than forecast. Net core Crown debt stood at 35.2 percent of GDP, \$1.9 billion less than forecast.

"This result shows the strength of the economy despite the volatility and uncertainty surrounding Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the ongoing pandemic. But the impacts of the Omicron outbreak have yet to be accounted for and this will affect Crown expenses in the current year," Grant Robertson said. "New Zealand is in a strong fiscal position, with lower than expected deficits and debt levels well below that of other countries we compare ourselves with. We will continue to take a balanced approach to respond to the ongoing pandemic and invest in long standing challenges such as climate change, housing and child wellbeing, while carefully managing our resources to ensure the long term sustainability of the economy."

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 04/05/2022

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## **TUVALU: Domestic Revenue Mobilization Vital, as Growth Projected to Reach 3% in 2022**

Growth in the Central Pacific economy of Tuvalu is projected to reach 3% in both 2022 and 2023, according to a new economic report released today by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). But the Asian Development Outlook (ADO) 2022, ADB's flagship annual economic report, notes that surging global oil prices will significantly affect inflation in the import-dependent country. The report says the narrow economic base of Tuvalu heightens the importance of domestic resource mobilization for achieving fiscal sustainability. "Delivering reforms to tax policy and tax administration that result in more efficient revenue collection is critical for supporting inclusive and sustainable growth in Tuvalu, as the economy emerges from the impacts of the global pandemic," said ADB Senior Country Officer Letasi Iulai.

Government dependence on volatile external revenue sources poses a threat to fiscal sustainability. For example, the instability of fish stocks makes it difficult to project license revenue from foreign fishing vessels and hampers efforts to produce a robust medium-term fiscal strategy. The report says internal revenue sources need to be improved, as government spending remains the main driver of economic activity in Tuvalu. Inflation is estimated to have surged to 6.7% in 2021 with the introduction of so-called "sin taxes" that year. Passed in the 2021 budget, these sin taxes were imposed on imports of cigarettes, alcohol, soft drinks, salted beef, lamb flaps, candies, and other unhealthy items to discourage consumption. At the same

time, duties on the import of fruit and vegetables were removed. Higher prices for imported goods and the surge in global oil prices are forecast to translate into 3.8% inflation in 2022 before it moderates slightly in 2023.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 04/06/2022

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## **Vanuatu and ADB Sign Grant Agreements to Support Disaster Resilience**

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of Vanuatu on 8 April signed grant agreements totaling \$2.9 million to improve resilience in the Greater Port Vila area through capacity building, institutional strengthening, and the construction of two multipurpose emergency shelters. Vanuatu's Minister of Finance and Economic Management Johnny Koanapo and ADB Director General for the Pacific Leah Gutierrez signed the grant agreements at a virtual event for the additional financing for the Greater Port Vila Urban Resilience Project. "Vanuatu ranks first globally as the economy most exposed to natural hazards," Ms. Gutierrez said. "This ADB-supported project will provide an important defense in Vanuatu's battle against climate change." "This project will boost Vanuatu's resilience to disasters and the effects of climate change," Mr. Koanapo said. "The additional financing from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and ADB's Ireland Trust Fund will help improve urban service delivery, and for that we are grateful. The Vanuatu government is committed to working with development partners such as ADB and other bilateral partners to ensure that projects are designed to boost the welfare of its people and make them more secure in times of disaster."

The additional financing will allow the ongoing project to be expanded to fund the construction of a third gender-responsive, multipurpose emergency shelter in the Freshwota-Tasariki ward, which will serve as a market building and will have capacity to house 153 people during emergencies; the piloting of nature-based coastal protection, including the planting of mangroves; and climate change modeling to guide the development and updating of key urban planning documents. The capital Port Vila is the economic gateway to Vanuatu. The Greater Port Vila area is subject to existing and future climate change impacts, including annual rainfall increase, sea level rise, storm surge, and increased temperatures. Around 16,000 people will benefit from the project and more than half of these are women. The additional financing comes from GEF (\$2.29 million) and the Ireland Trust Fund for Building Climate Change and Disaster Resilience in Small Island Developing States (\$700,000).

<https://www.adb.org/> 04/11/2022

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## **6、 Private Sector**

## Asia-Pacific

### **New World Bank Report Identifies Reforms to Improve State-Owned Enterprises**

The Gambia has made significant progress in reforming State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), but major efforts are still required to establish a sound, efficient and financially sustainable SOE sector, according to a new World Bank report released today. The Gambia Integrated State-Owned Enterprises Framework (iSOEF) report applies the new World Bank iSOEF methodology to assess The Gambia's SOE sector and its current reform trends. It is one of the first comprehensive applications in Africa and provides first, a landscape of SOEs in The Gambia, and then addresses key aspects for assessing SOEs, namely: "Effects on Markets"; "Fiscal Impact"; and "Corporate Governance and Accountability Mechanisms". The report assessed 12 non-financial SOEs identified as the SOE portfolio.

According to the report, SOEs are facing a wide range of issues, from insolvency, weak accounting systems, and the overstatement of assets to conflicting commercial and socio-economic objectives, and corporate governance issues. As a result, SOEs made a minor contribution to the government revenue in recent years but required significant budget support and pose sizable fiscal risks, as the portfolio lacks financial viability. The report further identifies that SOEs may be subject to a different set of market rules vis-à-vis private competitors, which creates market distortions and crowds-out private investment. The lack of a level playing field is translating into high prices, poor service delivery, and bottlenecks to improved competitiveness.

"This report provides a complete assessment of the SOE sector", stated Feyi Boroffice, World Bank Resident Representative for The Gambia. "The recommendations are aligned with our upcoming Country Partnership Framework for The Gambia (FY22-26) and will inform and support our ongoing efforts to ensure the country's transition out of fragility and the Government's vision of sustainable, resilient, and inclusive growth." The iSOEF assessment identifies key reforms to help the SOE sector improve on governance and performance, while limiting their fiscal costs and risks. To achieve these, the government must strengthen institutional arrangements for SOE financial oversight as a priority. The report further recommends that the financial relationships between the Government and SOEs be fully transparent, so that the magnitude of these transactions can be properly recorded in the budget, and that the annual audited financial statements and annual SOE aggregate reports be published on MOFEA's website regularly.

The report notes that SOEs should separate commercial and non-commercial functions to prevent distortions in pricing and cross-subsidization. It also recommends the introduction of competitive neutrality principles in the Competition Act and the elimination of regulatory provisions that allow the preferential access to



credit, essential facilities and key inputs to SOEs below market prices. “These reforms are necessary to strengthen the performance and corporate governance of SOEs which are a core element of the Gambian economy as well as improve service delivery and competitiveness. With public debt levels above 80 percent of GDP and in the face of many macroeconomic shocks such as the pandemic, Ukraine war, a projected fiscal cost of SOEs estimated at 5.0 percent of GDP over 2021-2030, in a no reform scenario, is simply too large not to merit urgent and substantial action,” said Mehwish Ashraf, World Bank Country Economist and lead author of the report.

From <https://www.worldbank.org/> 04/28/2022

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## **Push from Private Sector Essential to Accelerate Regional Integration and Address Challenges: APEC**

“A resolute push from the private sector provides the much-needed tailwinds for policymakers to move efforts in advancing regional economic integration, inclusivity, the digital economy and sustainability,” said the APEC Secretariat’s Executive Director, Dr Rebecca Sta Maria. During a visit to Canada, Dr Sta Maria briefed the region’s business leaders on progress made by APEC towards the recommendations provided by the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC) to embrace life post-COVID and future-proof the region’s trade architecture. “This year, Thailand is committed to refreshing our discussions on the Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific, or FTAAP—an important issue for us all, but something that could be an albatross for policymakers,” Dr Sta Maria said in her remarks at the second meeting of ABAC on Wednesday. “We need to come together, really engage and deliberate on what kind of next-generation trade and investment issues can be covered, including labor environments and the digital and green economy, as well as where will FTAAP appear in the current architecture of regional trade agreements.”

She highlighted the importance of advancing APEC’s work to reopen borders for safe and seamless travel, especially with respect to interoperability and mutual recognition of vaccine certificates, as well as a more inclusive APEC Business Travel Card—all of which are high on Thailand’s agenda as the host of APEC 2022. ABAC represents business leaders from the 21 APEC member economies and is currently convening in Vancouver for their second meeting of the year to develop policy recommendations for APEC Leaders. A dialogue between ABAC and APEC Ministers will be held at the upcoming Ministers Responsible for Trade Meeting on 21-22 May in Bangkok, Thailand. Dr Sta Maria reiterated the importance of strong cooperation between policymakers, business leaders, academia and youth in ensuring that a post-COVID growth model is sustainable and inclusive, and made in consultation with organizations on how to bring more engagement across sectors in APEC.

“APEC represents a specific way for economies to cooperate: it is voluntary,



nonbinding and operates on consensus; these factors make it possible for such a diverse group of economies to work together," Dr Sta Maria said. "The internationalization of small and medium enterprises, transition to a low-carbon, green and circular economy and the urgent need to equip the region better for the digital age are some of the priorities shared by APEC and Canada," Dr Sta Maria explained. "APEC is very open to inputs and collaboration with businesses, academia and the youth and we highly encourage engagement that strengthens not only our work agenda, but also ties between the Pacific and Asia." The organizations consulted include Google, the Asia-Pacific Foundation of Canada as well as the University of British Columbia. Dr Sta Maria also met with Canada's Trade Commissioner, Sara Wilshaw, as well as the Digital Supercluster of British Columbia.

From <https://www.apec.org/> 04/28/2022

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## East Asia

### **CHINA: Huawei's Consumer Business Group Officially Enters Commercial Field**

Huawei announced Wednesday that its Consumer Business Group has officially entered the commercial field in an "all-around way." The business group, which develops smart devices, will cover the two fields of consumer products and commercial products in the future, focusing on serving mass consumers, as well as government and corporate customers, said Richard Yu, executive director of Huawei. "In the future, Huawei will bring the boutique experience from consumer products to the commercial field," Yu said in a new-product release meeting held online. Huawei also said it will enrich its commercial notebooks, desktops, tablets and other product categories, as well as providing commercial office solutions for government and six major industries, including education, medical care, manufacturing, transportation, finance and energy.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 04/21/2022

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### **JAPAN: Fujitsu, Teikoku Databank Conduct Trial of Electronic Seal to Deliver Digital Documents Between Multiple Companies**

Fujitsu Limited and Teikoku Databank Ltd have begun Japan's first trials on the application of a Japanese version of an electronic seal to verify the authenticity of companies issuing digital documents. In the jointly-managed trials, the two companies will build a trust platform to issue a Japanese electronic seal for the delivery of digital documents by leveraging Fujitsu's digital trust technology and Teikoku's knowledge in corporate identity verification to confirm the usability of the newly developed seal. The two companies plan to use a level 1 or level 2 Japanese electronic seal as defined in the Japanese government's electronic seal guidelines.

Based on the demonstrations, the two companies aim to clarify tasks of the Japanese electronic seal and promote its practical application in society. As a next step, the two parties plan to conduct trials for delivering digital documents with the Japanese electronic seal in simulations with various companies until September 2022. This will include the verification of Japanese electronic seals issued via the newly constructed trust platform for digital documents delivered by email and via cloud services.

From <https://japantoday.com> 04/04/2022

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## **Smaller Firms Are Now Obligated to Take Steps to Prevent Power Harassment**

Japan has expanded employer obligations to prevent power harassment at the workplace to cover smaller firms, in addition to major companies under the scope up to now. Starting on April 1, small and mid-sized companies are obliged by law to set up consultation desks and take other measures to prevent power harassment. The Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry defines power harassment as words and acts by offenders, taking advantage of their position of authority over victims beyond the scope required and appropriate for work. Specifically, the ministry indicates six types, including physical abuse such as beating and kicking, as well as mental abuse by longtime, repeated reprimand. The ministry says it granted recognition of work-related accidents, including mental depression, to 608 people in fiscal 2020. Among them, the largest number, 16 percent, cited power harassment from those in senior positions as a reason for their sufferings. Some were driven to suicide.

Smaller firms are now mandated by law to make clear what constitutes power harassment in the workplace and make it known to all members. Employers also need to set up consultation desks, and deal properly with workers who perpetrated the harassment, after confirming the facts. Employers are also prohibited from treating employees disadvantageously when they seek help about harassment, such as dismissing them. Labor bureaus will give guidance to firms that fail to take necessary measures. They can disclose the names of firms that neglect to improve their working environment after such instructions. An official of the ministry says it will try to let the relevant law be better known to businesses. The official also says the ministry will help firms take steps by providing materials for in-house training sessions and through other means.

From <https://www3.nhk.or.jp> 04/08/2022

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## **SOUTH KOREA: Public Procurement Service Supports SMEs Through Expo**

Some 460 small- and medium-sized enterprises are participating in an annual expo

to market their technologies and products to large companies, public institutions and foreign buyers from Wednesday through Friday. The Korea Public Procurement Expo 2022, organized by the Public Procurement Service and held at Halls 3, 4 and 5 of the Korea International Exhibition Center 1 at Goyang, Gyeonggi Province, will help Korean companies that suffered amid the pandemic stretch their wings in the market that has begun to normalize. "This year's expo is held to promote new technologies and new products of procurement companies and startups which have been struggling due to the pandemic, and give them an opportunity to explore new sales channels at home and abroad," PPS Administrator Kim Chung-woo said in an email interview with The Korea Herald.

During the expo, one-on-one sales consultations will be arranged between the SMEs and large firms, as well as public institutions such as Korea Expressway Corp., Korea Land and Housing Corp. and Korea Water Resources Corp. The SMEs will present their products to potential clients for seven minutes, and answer questions for another seven minutes during the consultation sessions. In addition to guided tours offered at the expo, gifts will be given to visitors who collect stamps from the exhibit halls, and quiz events will be held. An international procurement workshop, which has been held simultaneously with the expo since 2016, will be held both online and offline this year in cooperation with the nonprofit organization Open Contracting Partnership. Experts and procurement personnel at international organizations will attend as panels of the workshop held under the theme of "economic recovery and preparing for the future through public procurement."

Also to be offered at the expo site are training sessions for officials at public institutions looking to purchase goods or services, and an international seminar on environmental, social and corporate governance and purchasing and procurement strategy. The seminar, organized by the Korea Association of Procurement and Supply Management and the Korea Institute of Procurement, is scheduled to be held from 2 p.m. through 5 p.m. on Wednesday. One-on-one online consultations will be held between local startups and 42 foreign buyers in 17 countries such as the US and Turkey at a video conference site within the exhibition hall. On Wednesday, there will be online lectures on programs for SMEs to expand overseas, how to tap into the US government procurement market, and understanding the Korea International Cooperation Agency's procurement contracts. This year, the PPS will focus on early execution of procurement contracts and supporting startups run by young entrepreneurs to help stimulate the economy.

"The PPS will execute 63 percent of its procurement contracts worth some 34.2 trillion won in the first half of this year, up from 27.1 trillion won in the first half of last year," Kim said. "More than 10 percent of our budget (of 46.5 billion won) for purchasing innovative products will go to youth startups, and we plan to increase support for SMEs and startups. The expo this month is an example." The PPS will also increase supply from its stockpile of raw materials; focus on stable supply and

management of public health and safety-related goods; and prioritize safety in contracts and management of public facilities, according to Kim. Another area of focus for the PPS is implementing social values in public procurement. The PPS plans to introduce ESG in public procurement by gradually reducing the supply of internal combustion engine vehicles on the PPS online shopping mall. It will also increase purchases of electric and hydrogen cars. The PPS will also increase support for innovative products and expand its digital, database-based procurement service, Kim said.

Another major task the PPS is working on is upgrading the Korea Online E-Procurement System (KONEPS), where comprehensive information on procurement of all public organizations is provided and the entire government procurement process is handled. About half a million businesses and some 60,000 institutions are currently using KONEPS, and the amount of transactions made on the system has more than tripled from 36 trillion won in its opening year of 2002 to 120 trillion won last year. User inconvenience has increased, however, due to system failures and slow speed. The need for a new service that applies artificial intelligence, big data, cloud computing and blockchain technologies led to a three-year, 100-billion won project to build the next generation version of KONEPS. "Slated to open in the first half of 2024, the new KONEPS will offer an intuitive menu and screen organization for better user experience, greater mobile service and paperless procurement administration," Kim said.

From <http://www.koreaherald.com> 04/12/2022

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## South-East Asia

### **THAILAND: Extend Co-Payment Scheme to Ensure 3% Growth This Year - Private Sector**

The Thai private sector is pushing for another extension of the government's "Kon La Krueng" co-payment scheme as an economic stimulus measure. Sanan Angubolkul, chairman of the Thai Chamber of Commerce and Board of Trade of Thailand, said on Friday that phase five of the scheme would help boost the country's gross domestic product (GDP) by 0.63 to 0.65 per cent. "This would certainly keep Thailand's GDP growth above 3 per cent this year," he said. Sanan estimated that a 1,500-baht subsidy for each of about 30 million Kon La Krueng participants would cost about 45 billion baht but spur circulation of about 90 billion baht. Extend co-payment scheme to ensure 3% growth this year: private sector Extend co-payment scheme to ensure 3% growth this year: private sector "The Chamber of Commerce realises the government wants to maintain the country's financial and monetary discipline, after a lot of money has been spent on different [economic stimulus] measures," Sanan said. "But further stimulus will bring a better result. It adds money to the economic system while helping to sustain small businesses and keep jobs," he added. He said that more

challenges were waiting for the government in May, as the rising diesel price was threatening to stall Thailand's economic recovery. Sanan also thanked the government's Centre for Covid-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) for heeding the private sector's call to cancel RT-PCR Covid tests for every traveller entering Thailand, starting from May 1. "We believe the cancellation will help revive the country's tourism, trade and investment," he said.

*From <https://www.nationthailand.com/> 04/22/2022*

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## **VIETNAM: Eyeing Green Agriculture, Private Sector Plays Key Role**

The Vietnamese Government is giving priority to promoting green agriculture, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Rural Develop Phùng Đức Tiến said, stressing the important role of the private sector in reducing carbon emissions and enhancing climate change adaptation. Tiến spoke at a workshop coorganised by the ministry and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) on Wednesday in Hà Nội, saying that Việt Nam needed to make great efforts, not only from the Government but also from private enterprises, to unlock investment resources in transforming the production model from resource-intensive to green. Tiến said that the agriculture sector had been the mainstay of the country's economy in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change, which helped ensure food security and poverty reduction and generated 15 per cent of GDP. However, the sector was facing a number of challenges and difficulties, including exhausted resources, environmental degradation, climate change and changes in global consumer trends, Tiến said, adding that not only was it heavily affected by climate change, the agricultural sector was also a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions. He cited statistics in 2016 that agricultural production accounted for 13.9 per cent of the country's total greenhouse gas emissions.

At the United Nations (UN) Food Systems Summit, Việt Nam set the target of becoming a transparent, responsible and sustainable food producer and supplier which met food security and nutrition requirements for the population of 100 million people and for export. At the 2021 UN Climate Change Conference (COP26), Prime Minister Phạm Minh Chính committed that Việt Nam would achieve net zero emissions by 2050. In January 2022, the Government approved the strategy for sustainable agriculture and rural development in the 2021-30 period with a vision to 2050, setting the goal of building an agriculture sector that would ensure food security, protect the environment, adapt to climate change and effectively implement international commitments on reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Hiễn said that to achieve these goals, private enterprises played an important role.

However, the number of enterprises operating in the agricultural sector remained modest, accounting for just 8 per cent of the total number of firms in the country,

while investment attraction in hi-tech agriculture was limited, given risks caused by climate change, diseases and unstable consumption markets. Most enterprises in agriculture were of small and medium size, with low efficiency, he added. Tiến said that the trend of green production and consumption and low emissions would dominate global agriculture and trade. "To be able to participate in the world's play ground, we need to take bold steps towards a transition to a green and low-emissions system," Tiến said, adding that the ministry would develop policies to encourage investment in hi-tech, clean and organic farming. According to Alfonso Garcia Mora, IFC Vice President for Asia and Pacific, the need for a more sustainable agriculture and food industry was more urgent than ever. He pointed out that the agri-food industry consumed a larger amount of energy each year than China's or the US' and farming, processing, food distribution, consumption and production accounted for 30 per cent of global energy consumption. Thus, it was important to reduce carbon emissions of the agriculture and food industry. However, building a climate-resilient economy would not be cheap, he said, adding that it was necessary to gradually increase environmental protection tax (EPT) together with other policies which would encourage enterprises to adopt greener and cleaner production and business models.

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 04/15/2022*

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## **Innovation Attracts Large Venture Capital**

This year will be pivotal for the next stage of development of innovative enterprises and Việt Nam's digital economy to attract investment capital. The Việt Nam National Innovation Center (NIC) and the venture capital firm Do Ventures Việt Nam jointly released the Việt Nam Innovation and Tech Investment Report on Thursday. This is the second year that the Việt Nam Innovation and Technology Investment Report has been released. Speaking at the ceremony, Deputy Minister of Planning and Investment (MPI) Trần Duy Đông said innovation was an inevitable trend not only in Việt Nam but also around the world. In recent years, Việt Nam had made drastic changes in mechanisms and policies for innovation, which is reflected in the Global Innovation Ranking (GII), where the country moved from 52nd place out of 141 countries and economies in 2015 to 44 out of 132 last year, holding the number one position in the group of 29 countries with the same income level. Last year the economy faced many difficulties because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but it was also a record year for venture investment in Việt Nam with a total investment of \$1.4 billion, an increase of 1.5 times compared to the previous record at \$874 million in 2019, with the appearance of two new technology "unicorns" Momo and Sky Mavis.

NIC reported that the total number of investment funds participating in Việt Nam increased by 60 per cent, evenly distributed among countries. Among them, the country with the most active investors last year was Singapore, followed by Việt Nam and the US. Investment activities from Japan into Việt Nam are also gradually

becoming more active after two years of slowing down. Total transactions of deals over \$10 million exceeded \$1 billion, up 255 per cent over the previous year. While the capital inflow into the seed round increased to a record high in both volume and value of the deal, the capital inflow into the rounds after series A has returned to pre-COVID-19 levels. In particular, last year saw the appearance of five transactions worth over \$100 million in the fields of payment, e-commerce and gaming. With a large number of potential early-stage companies and a favourable business environment thanks to the close support of the Government, Việt Nam's commercial ecosystem is ready to enter a more mature stage. Lê Hoàng Uyên Vy, CEO of Do Ventures, said that the e-commerce and start-up ecosystem in Việt Nam had made impressive recovery steps last year thanks to the persistence of businesses, as well as timely support from the Government. "With the current momentum of development, I believe that Vietnamese founders will continue to achieve success and make Việt Nam a remarkable technology hub in the region," said Vy. Deputy Minister Trần Duy Đông also affirmed that the domestic innovation and start-up ecosystem has recovered and reached a new height. "This is good news and contributes to promote the growth of Việt Nam's digital economy, a positive sign that we are on track to complete the target group of a digital economy that will contribute 30 per cent of GDP by 2030," said Đông.

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn> 04/22/2022*

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## **Việt Nam Seeks Ways to Boost Logistics Industry**

Việt Nam's geography gives it a logistical advantage in boosting production, export and logistics services. This year, the Government has set targets of tapping its full potential. The comment was made by Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry Nguyễn Sinh Nhật Tân at a seminar on "Enhancing competitiveness for logistics businesses", held in Hà Nội on Thursday. Delivering a speech at the seminar, Deputy Minister Tân said the Government has identified logistics as an important service industry in the economy. The industry is playing a role in supporting, connecting and boosting socio-economic development, contributing to improving the competitiveness of the economy. At the seminar, Trương Tấn Lộc, Marketing Director of Saigon Newport Corporation, said that in April this year the World Bank forecasted the country's GDP growth to be around 5.3 per cent in 2022 and then stabilise around 6.5 per cent next year. Lộc said the country's signed free trade agreements (FTAs) needed to be more proactively implemented for strong growth in domestic industries, especially in electronics, machinery and equipment, furniture, plastic, textiles and seafood. This was an opportunity to develop port and logistics services to serve the needs of connecting goods with major markets in the world.

Sharing the view of Lộc, Phạm Thị Lan Hương, general director of Vinafco JSC, said Việt Nam's logistics industry has a lot of potential but it is fragmented. She noted the number of small and medium-sized businesses accounted for a majority with 90 per

cent of them having capital of less than VNĐ10 billion (US\$434,000) Currently, the number of businesses providing 3PL (third-party logistics) and 4PL services (fourth-party logistics) remains modest. They account for only 16 per cent of the entire logistics industry. Hương said it needed to develop more 3PL and 4PL businesses to push the domestic logistics industry. Another participant suggested that it was necessary to promote technology application in the domestic logistics industry to improve efficiency and optimise productivity, to save costs for logistics businesses. In addition, a close connection between logistics businesses was also a need to improve operational efficiency involving production, logistics and transport.

### **Shortcomings ahead**

At the seminar, representatives of the authorities also pointed out the shortcomings in import and export activities in 2021, and logistics activities in Việt Nam. The Import and Export Report 2021 points out significant problems such as the continued high level of trade deficit or surplus for some markets, which is likely to affect sustainable import and export activities. The export growth of some commodities is mainly based on the increase in quantity and price due to the scarce supply in the market. Exported goods still face congestion at border gates and seaports, especially from the end of 2021. In logistics services, although there has been a strong development recorded, the logistics industry still has many limitations. One of them is that logistics enterprises have not yet developed up to the potential of the industry. According to data from the Việt Nam Logistics Business Association, currently, 90 per cent of logistics enterprises operating are Vietnamese enterprises. However, they only account for about 30 per cent of the market share. The rest belongs to foreign enterprises. There are many enterprises, but mostly small ones, with limited scale in the capital, human resources and experience.

In the framework of the seminar, the Việt Nam Import and Export Report 2021 compiled by the Ministry of Trade and Industry was also announced, highlighting the positive points in international trade activities. Despite many difficulties due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the country's import and export still reached a record number with a total turnover of \$668.55 billion. While, exports reached more than \$336.3 billion, up 19 per cent compared to 2020; imports reached \$332.2 billion, up 26.5 per cent; trade surplus of more than US\$4 billion. With this result, Việt Nam has entered the top 20 economies in terms of international trade. The export structure has changed positively, and the area of export products is diversified. The group of processed products continues to be the driving force for the overall growth of exports. Việt Nam has also made efforts to diversify export and import markets to meet the needs of domestic production and consumption. Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade Tân passed comments on the results achieved in import and export activities in 202 and international trade activities of Việt Nam. Total import and export turnover of goods from 2010 up to now has increased 4.25 times up from \$157.1 billion in 2010 to \$668.5 billion in 2021. He said that the positive result was thanks to the contribution of the logistics service. "During the COVID-19 pandemic, despite many



difficulties, Vietnamese logistics enterprises have adapted and maintained their supply chains. They have supported other enterprises in finding solutions to optimise logistics activities, saving costs and time. They propose the State's strategic issues, contributing to maintaining and stabilising the supply chain and improving the competitiveness of Vietnamese goods and businesses. Businesses also make efforts to modernise technology to improve service quality and diversify services to overcome difficulties," said the Deputy Minister.

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 04/30/2022*

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## South Asia

### **BANGLADESH: Corporate Sector Ready to Expand Economic Cooperation with Sri Lanka**

Sri Lanka High Commissioner to Bangladesh said that profound historical and cultural relations have lasted between Sri Lanka and Bangladesh and it is time to deepen the economic cooperation between the two countries. High Commissioner Professor Sudharshan Seneviratne highlighted the idea at a meeting held with the President of the Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) Jashim Uddin in Dhaka recently. Both the High Commissioner and the President discussed the necessity of diversifying export baskets of the two countries and the importance of finalizing the proposed Preferential Trading Agreement (PTA) which is presently under negotiation. The possibilities of strengthening cooperation in the field of trade, tourism, shipping, energy, investment, agriculture, healthcare and education were also discussed. The High Commissioner described the initiatives which were taken by the High Commission to promote the focus areas and requested the cooperation of FBCCI in implementing the proposed initiatives while engaging in active economic cooperation. FBCCI President Uddin stated that the Federation and the business communities have a high level of interest towards the proposed Preferential Trade Agreement and economic cooperation between the countries could be further strengthened through the proposed PTA. He agreed to extend the cooperation of FBCCI to deepen the economic cooperation with Sri Lanka. The High Commissioner invited a business delegation of FBCCI to visit Sri Lanka at a mutually convenient time and the FBCCI President together with other officials welcomed the idea of the High Commissioner and stated that a delegation would be organized in due course. The First Secretary (Commercial) of the High Commission of Sri Lanka Srimali Jayarathna participated in the discussion.

*From <https://www.lankabusinessonline.com> 04/06/2022*

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### **SRI LANKA: MAS Holdings' Calls for Immediate and Decisive Action to Resolve the Current Crisis**

MAS Holdings, one of Sri Lanka's largest private sector employers and exporters reiterates the need for immediate and decisive action to resolve the current economic and social crisis, in a peaceful and sustainable manner. Issuing a statement the organization said "Given the ensuing events, MAS as a responsible organization, unconditionally support the call for change and good governance, and earnestly request the nation's leaders to heed the voice of the people and act on it, whilst respecting legal and constitutional due process." On the 4th of April, MAS issued a statement expressing support of our citizen's right to participate in peaceful protests and the freedom of expression. Given the ensuing events, MAS reiterates the need for immediate and decisive action to resolve the current economic and social crisis, in a peaceful and sustainable manner. As a responsible organization, we unconditionally support the call for change and good governance, and earnestly request the nation's leaders to heed the voice of the people and act on it, whilst respecting legal and constitutional due process. As the largest private sector employer and exporter in Sri Lanka, MAS is also acutely aware of our role in maintaining the stability of Sri Lanka's economy. To this end, it is crucial that we focus on delivering on our commitments to our customers without disruption, to protect the livelihoods of our 92,000 associates, their families, and the country. The apparel industry has been the lifeblood of Sri Lanka's economy through many turbulent and crucial junctures in our history. We remain confident that together, we can overcome this crisis, and bring about lasting change to build our country back, better. As always, MAS is supporting our communities island wide during this time of hardship through our social outreach programs by assisting those that are the most adversely affected by the crisis. To all Sri Lankans – Be safe and be strong. Change is Courage.

From <https://www.lankabusinessonline.com> 04/20/2022

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## Central-West Asia

### **AZERBAIJAN: Holding Regular Privatization Auction**

BAKU, Azerbaijan, April 20. The State Service on Property Issues under Azerbaijan's Ministry of Economy held a regular auction for state property privatization, Trend reports citing the ministry. According to the ministry, 14 vehicles and one unfinished building (which is located in the Ismayilli district) were privatized following the auction results. As in previous auctions, great interest was shown in the purchase of vehicles. The offer for one of the vehicles exceeded the starting price by 1.41 times. HOWO car with a start price of 8,500 manat (\$5,000) was purchased for 12,000 manat (\$7,060). Another car (BMW) was bought for 3,650 manat (\$2,150) with a starting price of 2,500 manat (\$1,470). According to the results of the auction, 251,200 manat (\$147,760) is expected to be paid to the state budget.

From <https://en.trend.az/> 04/20/2022

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## **Dozens of Companies Provide Internet Services in Azerbaijani Market – Minister**

BAKU, Azerbaijan, April 28. Nearly 60 companies are providing internet services in Azerbaijan, Minister of Digital Development and Transport Rashad Nabiyev said at a conference on "Digital Entrepreneurship and Promising Opportunities" on April 28 in Baku, Trend reports. According to Nabiyev, along with providing the population with internet, the companies are also focused on projects bringing additional profit. "By the end of 2024, it's planned to cover the entire territory of Azerbaijan with internet," he noted. "In the regions with the low purchasing power internet tariffs will be cheap, and losses will be compensated by the funds of Aztelekom and Baktelecom LLCs." "To maintain the balance of the capital of companies, government subsidies will be issued," added the minister.

From <https://en.trend.az/> 04/28/2022

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## **Most Azerbaijani Entrepreneurs Invested in Creation of New Business Models, Dev't of Innovations – Minister**

Nearly 60 percent of Azerbaijani entrepreneurs have invested in the creation of new business models and the development of innovations, Minister of Digital Development and Transport Rashad Nabiyev said, Trend reports. Nabiyev made the remark at a "Digital Entrepreneurship and Promising Opportunities" conference on April 28 in Baku. According to him, work is underway to train IT specialists and assess human resources within the framework of digital transformation in Azerbaijan. "In Azerbaijan, the added value of products created by our businessmen is more than 99 percent, while in other countries this figure is 13 percent. This indicates that Azerbaijani businessmen invested in the development of innovations and their technical base in a timely manner," added Nabiyev.

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## **KAZAKHSTAN: Mining Industry to Ensure GDP Growth - Renaissance Capital**

The mining industry can ensure Kazakhstan's GDP growth by three percent compared to the previous year, Russia's Renaissance Capital investment bank told Trend. Mineral raw materials are still the basis of Kazakhstan's export, it accounts for 60 percent of merchandise exports (according to data from 2019 through 2021). "Oil dominates in the structure of commodity exports, the share of gas is only 5 percent. About 20 percent of exports are accounted for by products of ferrous metallurgy, copper, and uranium and world prices for these commodities are likely to rise as much this year as energy prices," the bank said. According to official statistics, the

share of the oil and gas sector in the structure of Kazakhstan's GDP is approximately 21 percent, but in a broad definition (taking into account industries serving this sector and financial flows), the contribution of the oil and gas industry, according to the bank, exceeds 30 percent. "We expect oil production in Kazakhstan to grow by 5-6 percent in 2022, compared to the previous year and this growth will offset the decline in 2020 and the lack of production growth in 2021," the bank said. At the same time, oil prices are now 50 percent higher than the average for 2021 and according to our calculations, each increase in the price of a barrel of hydrocarbon raw materials by \$10 provides an increase in the rate of Kazakhstan's GDP growth by approximately 0.4 percentage points, the bank noted.

"Taking this into account we assume that the extractive industry can ensure Kazakhstan's GDP growth by 3 percent in 2022 compared to the previous year," the bank added. The main buyers of Kazakh oil are traditionally European countries – in 2021, the EU received more than 60 percent of Kazakhstani oil exports, while China and India accounted for only 10 percent, the bank noted. Most of the oil exported by Kazakhstan is transported through Russia. This is a fairly significant factor of vulnerability, given the recent escalating sanctions pressure on Russia. However, we proceed from the fact that the probability of blocking Russian oil pipelines is very small and the prospect of a possible reduction in the purchase of Russian energy resources by the EU should ensure stable demand for Kazakhstani hydrocarbons, the bank noted. Kazakhstan's dependence on Russian pipelines should be seen as part of transaction costs or as a risk of short-term supply disruptions in such a situation, the bank added. "US Department of the Treasury issued a clarification about US decision to suspend oil purchases from Russia, clarifying that the ban does not apply to Kazakh oil supplied through the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC), which is 75 percent of oil exports of Kazakhstan. This is good news for Kazakhstan," the bank said.

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## **TURKMENISTAN: Canceling Mandatory Audit for Some Companies**

Turkmenistan has abolished mandatory audits for companies whose annual profit is less than 1 million Turkmen manats (\$285,700), Trend reports citing Orient news. The amendment to the Law protects the interests of Turkmen entrepreneurs and should help reduce the bureaucratic burden on business. An addition has also been made to Article 23 of the Law "On Auditing Activities". The amendment allows companies to claim compensation for damage caused as a result of offenses identified in the financial and economic activities of the auditing entity. Thus, the new amendment to this law has increased the responsibility of audit companies, which can now incur additional costs in case of improper work. The Law of Turkmenistan "On Auditing activities" was adopted in 2014.

## Oceania

### **NEW ZEALAND: First Tranche of Funding Open to Support the Future of Local Government and Communities**

Councils are now able to apply for the first tranche of funding from the Three Waters Reform Package to invest in their local communities, Local Government Minister Nanaia Mahuta announced today. “For far too long, Councils have had to offset difficult decisions about funding water infrastructure and services against other important initiatives, with water infrastructure often coming out second best,” Nanaia Mahuta said. “Councils are facing significant challenges over the coming years; with population growth, housing pressures, an increase in natural disasters and climate change, it is important that Councils are able to prepare their communities for the future. “As well as saving ratepayers money in the long term, the Government’s reform programme will enable councils to focus on the wellbeing and aspirations of their communities.

This “better off” funding can be used for those projects communities feel they need the most, be it local parks and gardens, swimming pools, libraries and community centres, or investment in public transport and infrastructure to protect against extreme weather events and sea level rises. “Applications are now open until 30 September for councils to submit funding proposals for their share of this first tranche of funding,” Nanaia Mahuta said. The terms around the use of this funding are set out in the Heads of Agreement negotiated by Local Government New Zealand last year. “We are pleased to be working with Local Government New Zealand not just on these reforms, but on other challenges and opportunities for the sector, including the Future for Local Government Review. Their contribution has been key to our improved relationship and policy development approach,” Nanaia Mahuta said.

It is estimated \$185 billion is needed to fix, upgrade and maintain New Zealand’s water services over the next 30 years, to ensure that critical water infrastructure is maintained. The Department of Internal Affairs has issued guidance to councils on the application process. The first tranche of \$500 million of funding will be available from 1 July 2022. Any unallocated money will be rolled into the next tranche, which becomes available on 1 July 2024, when the four publicly-owned Water Service Entities are established.

### **Government Partnership with Aerospace Start-up Helping Clear Airport Fog Delays**

A government partnership with New Zealand aerospace start-up, Pyper Vision, could help make fog delays a thing of the past for passengers, freight, airlines and airports around the world, Research, Science and Innovation Minister Megan Woods says. “Pyper Vision is developing a solution that disperses a safe water-absorbing environmentally-friendly product via drone that soaks up moisture in the air and clears runway fog so that pilots and air traffic controllers can operate safely. It’s a simple idea that could solve a multi-billion dollar problem. A critical area of sky can be cleared in as little as 10 minutes. “We all know what it’s like as a passenger flying in and out of New Zealand airports experiencing flight delays caused by heavy fog. As well as being frustrating, there are large costs for exporters, airlines and airports as well as significant carbon emissions from diverted flights,” Megan Woods said.

The development of Pyper Vision’s technology will be assisted through the Government’s Airspace Integration Trials Programme, which supports the safe integration of advanced aviation technologies into our existing transport system. “New Zealand’s emerging aerospace sector is highly innovative and research and development intensive, growing new industries in our economy and building our nation’s future talent and capability. Pyper Vision is a perfect example of Christchurch’s flourishing innovation hub in action,” says Megan Woods. “Many of our aerospace companies are net-zero or low-carbon, ensuring their impact is also kind to the planet. An important factor in the Government’s decision to partner with companies like Pyper Vision is that they are committed to ensuring the health of the environment through their operations.”

“Innovation is key to solving many of the challenges we face. Pyper Vision is an excellent example of how the Government can work with the aerospace industry to successfully develop new innovations that solve costly problems affecting people in this country and globally,” Megan Woods said. Pyper Vision aims to test and use its technology in airports throughout New Zealand, with a view to taking the product global. The absorbent used by Pyper Vision is approved for use by the Environmental Protection Authority and meets drinking water standards.

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 04/05/2022

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## **Primary Sector Workforce Support in Dairy, Meat and Forestry**

Critical skills gaps in the primary sector are being eased with a decision that opens the door for 1,580 additional experienced workers to come to New Zealand for jobs in the dairy industry, meat processing, and forestry. Exceptions are being made to usual immigration rules to deliver much needed help for our meat, forestry and dairy sectors to keep up the momentum of economic recovery, Agriculture Minister Damien O’Connor and Forestry Minister Stuart Nash announced today. “Our reconnecting strategy includes special immigration provisions to allow critical

workers to enter New Zealand, ahead of a full reopening and the wider re-set of border rules later in the year,” Damien O’Connor said. “Our food and fibre sector continues to lead the economic recovery from COVID-19. Food and fibre export revenue is expected to hit more than \$50 billion by 30 June 2022, and it’s vital the sector has the experienced workforce it needs to achieve this.

“New Zealand’s food and fibre sector continues to show its resilience and ability to adapt and respond to the challenges brought about by COVID-19, but extra help is needed. “It’s clear our red meat sector needs access to experienced processing workers to tackle workforce challenges and preserve vital supply chains. Our previous border exception for 150 meat processors is fully subscribed. We are expanding the provision by an additional 500 workers. “The Government has also increased the current allowance for migrant dairy workers. Our calving season kicks off in June and July, and the dairy sector needs extra workers during this busy period. “We’ve boosted the current dairy worker immigration arrangement by an extra 500 workers to enable our dairy industry to build capacity in the lead up to calving.

“This takes the number of migrant workers under this border exception arrangement to 800. There are no caps on particular roles in order to provide flexibility,” said Damien O’Connor. Forestry Minister Stuart Nash says the Government has also agreed with an industry request for up to 300 silviculture forestry workers and up to 280 wood processors and manufacturers to enter New Zealand. “The forestry industry is a big presence in our rural communities and regional economies, bringing vital jobs to regions across the country,” said Stuart Nash. “The forest planting season runs from May to September and a shortage of workers could limit the number of trees going in the ground, and their survival rates. Silviculturalists also add value to the wider forest nursery industry through their management of plantings.

“The forestry industry also needs skilled workers in wood processing and manufacturing, across a range of roles like kiln operators, electricians, sawmill workers, timber machinists and carpenters. Extra help from migrant workers will keep building and construction supply chains open and meet the growing demand for timber and wood products. “The forestry sector employs around 35,000 people and skills shortages in one area have flow-on effects given its highly integrated nature. Today’s changes will help lift the wider performance of this sector of our economy, and ease pressures in rural communities,” said Stuart Nash. The border class exceptions take effect from today, 12 April, and will address critical worker shortages in the lead up to implementation of the new Accredited Employer Work Visa (AEWV) which opens on 4 July 2022.

Damien O’Connor said the Government is committed to working alongside the food and fibre sector to meet the challenges from COVID-19. “I’d like to acknowledge the ongoing efforts of our farmers, growers, fishers, foresters, processors and others who contribute to keeping the engine room of New Zealand’s economy ticking. “The

sector is providing vital food and fibre products for Kiwis and millions around the world, and the Government is committed to working alongside the sector to tackle COVID-19 challenges head on and support the sector's long-term success," Damien O'Connor said.

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 04/12/2022

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