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# ASIA-PACIFIC GOVERNANCE WATCH

September 2022, Issue 227

**UNPAN-AP**  
Editorial Department,  
RCOCI





# Asia-Pacific Governance Watch

September 2022, Issue 227

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## 1、 Government Policy and Legislation

### Asia-Pacific

#### **Statement by the Secretary-General on the Centre for Tax Policy and Administration**

After 15 years at the OECD, including 10 years as the Director of the Centre for Tax Policy and Administration (CTP), Pascal Saint-Amans will retire from the organisation at the end of October 2022. While sad to see Pascal leave the Organisation, I respect his decision that this is the time for him to pursue other career opportunities. I am very grateful to Pascal for the enormous, historically significant contribution he has made to international tax policy reform and administration through his work at the OECD. In 2012, he launched the Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) Project,



delivering the 15-point action plan of BEPS measures to tackle tax avoidance within a record two-year period, including a new type of multilateral instrument that has since been signed onto by 99 jurisdictions.

As part of the BEPS Project, he brokered last year's landmark agreement among 137 countries and jurisdictions on the two pillar solution to the tax challenges arising from the digitalisation and the globalisation of the economy. He also led the establishment of automatic exchange of financial account information as a global standard in 2014, which is being implemented, in addition to exchange of information on request, by most of the 165 members of the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information in Tax Matters, using the Common Transmission System also developed under his leadership.

Together with the United Nations Development Programme Pascal established the Tax Inspectors without Borders programme, designed to help developing countries build tax audit capacity. That programme has delivered impressive results: a total of USD 1.7 billion tax revenues has been collected and USD 3.9 billion in tax has been assessed through these assistance programmes across Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe, as well as Latin America and the Caribbean. Building on his experience in establishing the Inclusive Framework on BEPS and CTP's work on carbon pricing, he also played a key role in the establishment of the Inclusive Forum on Carbon Mitigation Approaches, which we successfully launched at this year's OECD Ministerial Council Meeting.

I am delighted to announce that Grace Perez-Navarro has agreed to take on the Director role at the Centre for Tax Policy from 1 November 2022 until 31 March 2023. This will help us maintain our momentum on the implementation of our Two-Pillar international reform efforts at a critical time. Grace is exceptionally well suited to this role, given her outstanding credentials and external reputation and her long-term role in leading the work of the Centre for Tax Policy and Administration alongside Pascal. As Deputy Director of CTP since 2007, Grace has been centrally involved in all the important work of CTP, including the Two-Pillar negotiations and the recent establishment of the Inclusive Forum on Carbon Mitigation Approaches.

Grace will be supported by two Acting Deputy Directors - David Bradbury and Achim Pross. David has been the Head of the Tax Policy and Statistics Division since April 2014 and Achim has been the Head of the International Co-operation and Tax Administration Division since 2011. 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/> 09/05/2022

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**Tax Policy Is Playing a Key Role in Promoting Economic**

## Recovery and Responding to the Energy Price Shock

Tax policy is playing a critical role as countries seek to promote economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and respond to the impact of rapid increases in energy prices, according to a new OECD report. Tax Policy Reforms 2022 describes recent tax reforms across 71 countries and jurisdictions, including all OECD members and selected members of the OECD/G20 Inclusive Framework on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting. The report finds that tax reforms - notably reductions in taxes on labour and more generous corporate tax incentives - have been among the key policy tools that countries have used to stimulate growth and promote economic recovery from the pandemic.

As energy prices rose steeply from the second half of 2021, countries moved quickly to shield households and businesses by providing temporary fiscal support - including tax cuts - and by tapering existing stimulus measures that could add to inflation. "Recent tax reforms have been targeted at stimulating economic recovery from COVID-19, while countries with the greatest fiscal space have been providing more generous tax benefits for longer periods of time," said Pascal Saint-Amans, Director of the OECD Centre for Tax Policy and Administration. "Countries have also used tax policy as one of their main tools in responding to rapid rises in energy prices."

Personal income taxes and social security contributions were reduced in 2021 in almost all countries covered in the report, with most reductions targeted at lower-income households to support employment and provide in-work benefits. Many countries also increased corporate tax incentives to stimulate investment and innovation. The most significant VAT reforms focused on the digital economy and e-commerce, including strong growth in e-invoicing and digital reporting requirements. Property tax reforms were less common in 2021, with a small number of countries implementing measures to reduce the use of properties as investment vehicles and improve equity in the housing market.

A Special Feature in this year's report highlights how tax policy has been used by governments to provide significant support to households and businesses, shielding them from the impact of high energy prices. The report notes that the measures introduced through mid-2022 to lower the price of energy were rapidly deployed and often relatively simple to implement. However, the report also suggests that governments could provide more targeted measures for at-risk groups, improve the resilience of households that are vulnerable to price shocks, and accelerate the development of alternative sources of energy and modes of transport.

To access the report, data, and summary, visit [www.oecd.org/tax/tax-policy-reforms-26173433.htm](http://www.oecd.org/tax/tax-policy-reforms-26173433.htm). Media enquiries should be directed to David Bradbury (+33 1 45 24 15 97), Head of the Tax Policy and Statistics

Division in the OECD Centre for Tax Policy and Administration (CTPA), Bert Brys (+33 1 45 24 19 27), Head of the Country Tax Policy Unit in CTPA, or Lawrence Speer in the OECD Media Office. 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/> 09/21/2022

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## **APEC Is on Track to Meet Aspirational Energy Goals**

APEC is on track to meet its aspirational goals to reduce energy intensity by 45 percent by 2035, relative to 2005 levels, and to double the share of modern renewables by 2030, relative to 2010 levels, according to a newly launched energy report. According to the APEC Energy Demand and Supply Outlook, energy intensity in APEC has been improving at an average annual rate of 1.9 percent since 2005 or cumulatively at 22 percent from 2005 to 2018. In the current scenario, where existing trends in technology development and deployment and current government programs and policies continue, APEC will reach its goal to reduce energy intensity one year earlier than expected, in 2034. Energy intensity refers to the energy needs of an economy. Reducing energy intensity means to use less energy to produce a product or a service.

APEC's share of modern renewables increased from 6.1 percent in 2010 to 8.7 percent in 2018. The region is expected to meet the goal of doubling renewables four years ahead of schedule, in 2026. This suggests that APEC economies are well on their way to significantly accelerating the deployment of renewables. "The progress that we are seeing now has been achieved mainly through structural reform efforts in improving energy efficiency in the industry, transport and building sectors," explained Kazutomo Irie, the President of the Asia-Pacific Energy Research Centre (APERC), which produced the report. "APEC economies have also increased their direct consumption of renewables in end-use sectors and increased in the share of electricity generated by wind and solar technologies," he added. Based in Tokyo, the center was established in 1996 following the directive of APEC Leaders to foster a common understanding of, and solutions to, the energy challenges facing APEC member economies. Since then, the center has been conducting studies and analysis of each APEC member economy's energy demand and supply trends, future energy demand and supply outlook, the development of their energy markets and responses to policy challenges.

The report highlights the significant decoupling trend between energy demand and economic activity, that even with much higher economic output, end-use energy demand would only grow by a modest amount—around 14 percent from 2018 to 2050. Decoupling refers to efforts made to ensure economic growth is achieved with less energy dependency. "This increase in energy demand will support a more than

doubling in economic activity. It shows that the decoupling story is influential in all APEC economies,” Irie explained. “Decoupling is driven by continued improvements to energy efficiency, at the same time, there is a shift away from more carbon-intensive fossil fuels such as coal and oil, supported by a growth in electrification.” In her remarks at the report launch in Tokyo, APEC Secretariat Executive Director, Dr Rebecca Sta Maria, emphasized that while climate change is a global threat, its effects are especially felt in the Asia-Pacific region, “where thousands of vulnerable communities are exposed to extreme weather events.”

“It is interesting to note at this point that, since the last Outlook was published in 2019, before COVID, the APEC region’s energy demand, supply, production, electricity generation, and CO2 emissions have all grown,” Dr Sta Maria added. “But it is also encouraging to see that APEC is pushing through its ambitious goal to reduce energy and increase the use of renewables through structural reforms and energy efficiency programs.” APEC accounts for 56 percent of world energy demand, 58 percent of world energy supply and 68 percent of world electricity generation. APEC accounts for 60 percent of global CO2 emissions. Dr Sta Maria reiterated that more work needs to be done to accelerate progress and that the massive post-pandemic stimulus resources deployed by governments to accelerate recovery could be used, in part, to further integrate environmental sustainability. “Supporting a green, sustainable recovery is particularly important for APEC economies,” she concluded.

From <https://www.apec.org/> 09/30/2022

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## East Asia

### **CHINA: Top Legislature Adopts Revised Agricultural Products Law**

Chinese lawmakers on Friday voted to adopt a revised Law on Quality and Safety of Agricultural Products at the 36th session of the Standing Committee of the 13th National People's Congress (NPC), China's top legislature. The revisions were done to enhance the law connection with the Food Safety Law, so that all the links related to food safety, including production, processing and consumption, could be effectively supervised and regulated in accordance with the law. The revised law includes stipulations ensuring that the country's quality and safety standards for agricultural products are fully implemented. New quality and safety requirements regarding the transportation and storing of agricultural products were also added. Governmental departments in charge of rural and agricultural affairs ought to enhance coordination with market supervision authorities to better ensure the quality and safety of agricultural products, according to the revised law.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 09/02/2022

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## **China to Step Up Regulation on Overpackaging**

China will step up its regulations on overpackaging in a bid to facilitate a green shift in production and lifestyle, according to a notice released by the State Council. A string of requirements have been made on links including production, sales, delivery and recycling to stem overpackaging, said the notice. By 2025, overpackaging in major monitored commodities like mooncakes and tea will be under effective control, it said. Packaging innovation will be encouraged to promote green packaging solutions, while supervision will be enhanced on e-commerce, courier and food delivery services. The notice also encouraged the development or modification of local regulations on overpackaging as well as the improvement of related standards.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 09/08/2022

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## **Chinese Premier Stresses Policy Implementation to Stabilize Economy**

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang has stressed efforts to ensure the implementation of policy measures to stabilize economic growth, employment and prices. 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 special meeting after hearing reports from two working groups on work for stabilizing the economy. The working groups have been sent by the State Council to 16 provincial-level regions to supervise and provide services to the localities in resolving difficulties in policy implementation. Vice Premier Han Zheng, also a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, attended the meeting. The country has adopted a package of strong and effective policies for stabilizing the economy in a timely manner, Li said, stressing the need to ensure the solid implementation of the policies.

Noting that stabilizing the economy depends on market entities, Li urged efforts to help market entities tide over difficulties while expanding effective investment to create demand for the market entities and boost their confidence. Efforts should be made to speed up the construction of key projects, and increase the quota of the policy-backed and development-oriented financial instruments based on the local needs, Li said. The government will support people's essential housing needs as well as their needs for better housing, and make good use of the policy toolkit by adopting city-specific policies, Li said. Li also stressed promoting the sustained and healthy development of the platform economy, adding that special loans will be used to support the platform enterprises. The country will continue to roll out more phased policies to expand consumption and investment, Li said, urging local governments and relevant departments to come up with concrete measures.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 09/12/2022

## **China to Make Greater Efforts for Policy Implementation to Bolster Economic Recovery and Growth**

At a State Council Executive Meeting held on Wednesday, Premier Li Keqiang heard a report on the ninth round of State Council's accountability inspection. He urged greater efforts for policy implementation to bolster the recovery and growth of the economy. The meeting noted the recent ninth round of accountability inspection by the State Council in some localities. The inspection focused on supervising and inspecting local efforts in stabilizing economic performance and meeting people's basic needs, and helped resolve a set of difficulties various localities faced. It was conducted mainly through unannounced visits, which made the inspection more effective and lessened the burdens on primary-level governments. Going forward, the list of identified problems will be sent to related localities and departments to make rectification and forestall similar occurrences.

The taskforces that supervise and assist efforts for stabilizing overall economic performance should remain on duty to better align their work with the accountability inspection, and continue to coordinate the settlement of problems. Policy measures to boost investment and consumption will be advanced on a priority basis, such as fiscal, taxation and financial support for key infrastructure projects and equipment upgrading and renovation. Localities are urged to fulfill their due responsibilities for stabilizing the economy and meeting people's basic needs. Economically strong provinces should play a leading role and work together to consolidate the foundation for economic stability and promote recovery and growth. To deepen the reform of government functions and make government services more efficient and effective, a list of high-demand government services that affect a wide range of sectors and are accessed in relatively concentrated timeframes will be set up, covering all key stages in the life circles of businesses and individuals, to meet their real needs.

Government departments will merge related items, and work to provide one-stop, cross-agency services for items that used to require multiple visits to multiple departments, so as to save hassle for businesses and the people. For market players, five items of government services, i.e. starting of business, permit for business operation, employee recruitment, real estate registration and simplified enterprise de-registration, can now be accessed on a one-stop basis. This will lower institutional transaction costs and help market entities emerge and grow. It will also help unlock and boost productivity to cope with new downward pressure. For individuals, one-stop services will be provided on eight administrative items, involving newborns, flexible employment, marriage and childbirth, assistance to the disabled and people in hardship, discharge of military personnel, ownership transfer registration of second-hand houses and associated utility services, retirement of enterprise employees and posthumous procedures, to better serve people's needs and provide

greater convenience.

All localities must fulfill these tasks by the end of the year. Those who fail to deliver will be made known and urged to rectify on a time-bound basis. Noting that transportation and logistics are the lifeline of a market economy, the meeting stressed the need to keep transportation and logistics smooth and enhance policy support. The meeting required all-out efforts to ensure the normal functioning of ports and cargo terminals, as well as smooth logistics in both trunk and branch routes. Unnecessarily stringent measures and a one-size-fits-all approach must be forestalled. In Q4, highway tolls for trucks will be cut by 10 percent. In the meantime, targeted financial policy support will be provided to tolled highway operators, to lower their financing costs as appropriate. Government-priced harbor dues on cargo will be lowered by 20 percent in Q4.

The 100-billion-yuan (about 14.33 billion U.S. dollars) special re-lending for transportation and logistics will be put to good use to help freight companies and drivers get through the difficulties. The meeting underlined the need to pursue law-based administration and step up the building of a law-based government. The exercise of power must not be arbitrary. Administrative reconsideration is a supervision mechanism that allows the government to make self-correction, and is conducive to preventing and redressing unlawful or inappropriate administrative conducts. It is a remedy system for settling the administrative disputes under which citizens sue the government, and helps safeguard the lawful rights and interests of citizens and legal persons. The meeting adopted a draft revision of the Administrative Reconsideration Law of the People's Republic of China. In keeping with the principle of serving the people, the draft lays down clearer provisions on expanding the scope of accepted cases, improving the quality of case handling, and strengthening the oversight of administrative reconsideration over administrative law enforcement, to enhance the credibility of administrative reconsideration and build it into the main channel for settling administrative disputes. The meeting decided to submit the draft to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress for deliberation.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 09/22/2022

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## **Chinese Premier Urges Policy Implementation to Boost Economic Recovery**

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang on Wednesday called for solid efforts to carry out the country's policies aimed at stabilizing economic recovery. 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 meeting on government work regarding economic stabilization for the fourth quarter of this year. Vice Premier Han Zheng, also a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, attended the meeting. To reverse a downturn in the second quarter

inflicted by unexpected factors, China has rolled out a raft of macroeconomic policies as well as their successive measures, with a higher priority on stabilizing economic growth. Efforts have also been put into safeguarding market entities, steadying prices and catalyzing demand, Li said. Thanks to these efforts, the economy began to recover and regain its overall stability in the third quarter, the premier said.

Looking forward to the fourth quarter, Li said that it is the most important period throughout the whole year, and many policies are expected to play a greater role during the period. The country must seize the timeframe to anchor market expectations and ensure the full implementation of policies so that the economy runs within an appropriate range, said Li. To spur the weak domestic demand, the country needs to seek more approaches to boost effective investment and consumption, and give full play to market entities and social capital, he said. While making full use of the policy-backed and development-oriented financial instruments to expedite infrastructure construction, the country should allocate special re-loans and interest subsidies to speed up the equipment upgrades in the manufacturing, service and social service industries. Part of the 2023 quota for the special-purpose bonds will also be front-loaded.

With regard to the housing market, Li said that the country would formulate region-specific measures to meet the demand from both first-time home buyers and home upgraders, and ensure timely deliveries of pre-sold housing. He also called for efforts to guarantee smooth logistics and steady supply of coal and electricity, adding that the country's economic powerhouses should play their underpinning role in stabilizing economy. Concerning people's livelihoods, Li urged the country to gradually expand the coverage of basic living allowance. He said that the central budget would subsidize local governments in terms of new expenditure in this regard. Migrant workers returning to their hometowns will also be incorporated into the country's unemployment relief and subsidy work, the premier added.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 09/28/2022

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## **SOUTH KOREA: Nat'l Assembly Passes Revision Bill on Easing Real Estate Tax Burden**

The National Assembly on Wednesday passed a revision bill aimed at easing tax burdens on those owning only one home as part of efforts to improve people's financial situations amid high inflation. Under the revision bill, long-term owners of one home will be allowed to postpone payment of the comprehensive real estate holding tax and those who own two homes temporarily will be considered as single householders. A majority of 178 of 245 lawmakers who attended the plenary meeting voted in favor of it. Some 184,000 home owners are expected to benefit from the bill revision.

From <https://en.yna.co.kr> 09/07/2022



## **Bill on Recording Ban Sparks Debate on Privacy, Self-Protection**

A proposed bill that bans the recording of phone calls and conversations without consent has prompted a debate on the boundary of privacy in a country where recorded clips of conversations often make headlines in whistleblowing cases and political spats. A group of ruling People Power Party lawmakers, led by Rep. Yoon Sang-hyun, proposed the bill in late August that bans phone recordings and conversations without the consent of everyone taking part. Those who breach the law can face up to 10 years in prison, according to the proposal. The ruling party lawmakers claimed that the current law, which allows recordings by a person taking part in the conversation, carries the risk of compromising privacy and breaching one's dignity and right to pursue happiness as written in the Constitution.

In a policy discussion session at the National Assembly on Tuesday, Yoon also claimed that banning the recordings will prevent the country's politics from getting mired in unnecessary squabbles that erupted from phone recordings. The proposal, however, has faced strong backlash from opponents claiming that the bill will strip the minority and underdogs of a means to protect themselves in unfair situations, noting how recordings of conversations are often used as effective evidence in court. Recorded clips of conversations have often made headlines in cases where housekeepers or drivers of the rich and powerful revealed their bosses' verbal abuse to the press. A nationwide poll of 503 respondents aged over 18 conducted by Realmeter also showed that 64.1 percent were against the bill because phone recordings can be used to protect individuals in unjust situations or to report irregularities in whistleblowing cases.

Younger respondents and those who identified themselves as liberal or neutral tend to be more opposed to the bill in contrast to some 23.6 percent who said they support the bill as call recordings may be abused for blackmailing and infringe privacy. Experts called for a cautious approach in adopting the bill. "The bill should be reviewed in a prudent manner," Lee Min, a lawyer who took part in the panel discussion at the National Assembly, said, mentioning how this debate can escalate into a bigger debate on technology and privacy on speed cameras, close circuit television and black boxes. "At the end of the day, trust will be higher in a society where recording is common and people understand they cannot easily change their words." Yoon said he will consider submitting a revised proposal for exceptions in cases like workplace bullying, sexual harassment and verbal abuse.

From <https://en.yna.co.kr> 09/12/2022

## **S. Korea Should Prepare Exit Strategy of Pandemic Adviser**

South Korea should prepare to gradually end COVID-19 emergency response system in a step toward the people's return to normalcy amid a moderate declining trend of the virus, an adviser said Friday. South Korea reported 51,874 new COVID-19 cases, including 348 from overseas, earlier in the day, bringing the total to 24,316,302, the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA) said. Jung Ki-suck, a civilian adviser to the government task force on the pandemic, made the case for dealing with the pandemic in a normal manner from an emergency response system, citing the transition in major countries. "We should prepare an exit strategy" from the COVID-19 pandemic, Jung said in a briefing, adding major countries, including the United States, Britain, Germany and France, have lifted indoor mask mandates except for several facilities. The World Health Organization has also declared the end of the pandemic is in sight. Jung said South Korea should not be left behind when the global pandemic ends to bolster the nation's trade-dependent economy, saying global trade could return to normal in the next six months.

In April, South Korea removed almost all social distancing rules to support the people's return to normalcy, including private gathering limits and business hour curfews. Jung said South Korea could handle COVID-19 like a seasonal flu, considering its medical response system and a downward trend of the fatality rate and proportion of critically ill patients. South Korea's COVID-19 fatality rate has recently dropped to 0.04 percent, compared with 2.1 percent in the early stages of the pandemic. On Friday, South Korea reported 60 COVID-19 deaths, raising the death toll to 27,725. The fatality rate stood at 0.11 percent. The number of critically ill patients stood at 516, up 25 from the previous day. Separately, the government said it will give a green light to use the nation's first homegrown COVID-19 vaccine, SKYCovione, as a booster shot. Developed by SK Bioscience Co., the vaccine was previously allowed only to be administered as one of the two main inoculations. As of 9 p.m. on Friday, the country had reported 41,902 additional cases, down 8,249 from the same time the previous day. Daily cases are counted until midnight and announced the following morning.

From <https://en.yna.co.kr> 09/16/2022

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## **S. Korea to Introduce Digital Society Framework Act in 2023 ICT Ministry**

South Korea plans to legislate a comprehensive framework act next year stipulating basic rights on digital accessibility and the fostering of related social infrastructure, the Ministry of Science and ICT said Wednesday. The bill, tentatively named the Digital Society Framework Act, will be drafted to call for the promotion of digital industries and the establishment of related social infrastructure. It will also call for the nurturing of talent in digital fields, the ministry said. The plan was announced at a government economic policy meeting presided over by President Yoon Suk-yeol at the Kim Dae-jung Convention Center in Gwangju, some 270 kilometers south of

Seoul. The ministry is mulling over creating the bill by combining the current framework acts on national informatization, and information and communication convergence. The government also plans to adopt an official rights charter that calls for the guarantee of the people's digital accessibility and the closing of the digital divide, officials said. Vice Science Minister Park Yoon-kyu said the government will create the charter next year after discussing it with experts in the direction of expanding the people's digital accessibility rights and freedom.

From <https://en.yna.co.kr> 09/28/2022

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## South-East Asia

### **INDONESIA: Parliament Passes Bill on Data Privacy**

Indonesia's House of Representatives passed a data privacy bill on Tuesday, Minister of Communication and Information Technology Johnny G. Plate said after a plenary session to legislate the new law. The minister said that the bill, which was initially proposed in 2016, will strengthen trust and recognition of Indonesia's leadership in global data governance. "From government perspective, the data protection law will strengthen the role and authority of the government in enforcing and supervising the compliance and obligations of all data operators," Plate said.

From <https://english.news.cn/> 09/20/2022

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### **CAMBODIA: Gov't Approves National Policy for Agricultural Development in 2022-30**

The Council of Ministers of Cambodia on Friday approved the national policy of agricultural development in 2022-30. Government spokesperson Phay Siphon said the approval was made at a weekly cabinet meeting presided over by Prime Minister Samdech Techo Hun Sen. He said the policy was aimed at promoting the growth of the country's agriculture sector through modernization, increased productivity, diversification and competitive commercialization in order to ensure food security and nutrition. "This national policy is very important," Siphon said, as it will "guide all stakeholders to develop specific action plans to achieve the vision." "It will transform Cambodia's agriculture into a modern, competitive, inclusive, climate-resilient, and sustainable one that will increase the income of farmers' families, prosperity and well-being of the Cambodian people," he added. Roughly 75 percent of Cambodia's 16 million population live in rural areas, and the country's agriculture sector created 3.12 million jobs, or 35.5 percent of the total employment, and contributed 24.4 percent to the gross domestic product (GDP) in 2021, according to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. Rice is the main crop in the Southeast Asian country, where some 12.2 million tons of paddy rice was produced in 2021, an increase of 11.6 percent year-on-year, the ministry said.

## **THAILAND: Revenue Department to Come Up with Carbon Tax Plan Next Year**

The Revenue Department Will Next Year Come Up With Clear Measures And Rates For Carbon Taxes On Goods That Emit High Carbon Dioxide During Production, Its Chief Said On Monday. Ekniti Nitithanprapas, director-general of the department, said clear measures and rates for collecting the so-called carbon tax would be ready by next year. He said the department is now studying effective measures to slap carbon tax on goods and services that emit high volume of greenhouse gases as several other countries have started collecting the tax. "Thailand cannot avoid collecting carbon tax because many other countries have already started doing it," Ekniti said. He said European Union nations would next year start collecting carbon taxes on five goods whose production processes cause high carbon dioxide emissions. The five goods categories are: cement, steel, aluminium, chemicals and fertilisers, and electricity. "If Thailand does not collect carbon taxes on these goods, exporters will have to pay the tax at the destination EU nations. If we collect the tax in Thailand, we will negotiate with the EU to exempt the goods from double carbon tax," Ekniti said. So far, the department is contemplating two methods – collecting on the goods or collecting tax on the production process at the factories. For the first option, the tax will vary in accordance with amount of carbon dioxide emitted when the goods are made, Ekniti said. For the second option, the department will collect carbon tax during the manufacturing process – at the start, the midway and the end of production. He said if the department chooses the second option, it will have to consult the Thailand Greenhouse Gas Management Organisation on the collection method and tax rates. Ekniti said the carbon tax is being planned in accordance with the department's goal to promote Environment, Social and Governance among businesses. The goal is to support the government's target of having carbon neutrality by 2050 and net zero emission by 2065.

From <https://www.nationthailand.com/> 09/12/2022

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## **Power Bill Subsidy for Household Users Gets Cabinet Nod**

The Government Has Earmarked 9 Billion Baht To Subsidise People's Power Bills From September To December To Soften The Impact From Rising Energy Prices, Energy Minister Supattanapong Punmeechaow Said After A Cabinet Meeting On Tuesday. Household electricity users will get the subsidy from September until 2022-end. Households that use 301-500 units per month will receive 15 to 75 per cent subsidy on their bills. Meanwhile, households using less than 300 units per month will get a subsidy of 0.9204 baht per unit. Supattanapong said about 80 per cent of all residential users nationwide will benefit from this measure. The subsidy

measure will require a budget of 9 billion baht, which will come from the budget for fiscal year 2022-23. He said the ministry also would consider extending the move next year, depending on the price of natural gas, the main cost in generating electricity. Supattanapong called on the public to continue saving energy amid the rising global energy prices. "If Thai people would reduce energy consumption by 10-20 per cent, they could save significant amount of money on their power bills, not to mention it will help the country in not having to rely heavily on imported energy, which tends to become more expensive," he said.

*From <https://www.nationthailand.com/> 09/13/2022*

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## **VIETNAM: Issuing New Rules on Facemasks in New Normal**

The Ministry of Health has issued guidance on the wearing of masks in public places for COVID-19 prevention and control, clarifying where coverings are compulsory. Under the new rules issued by the ministry on Tuesday, medical face masks are not mandatory in crowded outdoor places such as apartment buildings, schools, bus stations and parks. People no longer have to wear a mask when in close contact as per the previous rule issued by the Ministry of Health last February. Under the new rules, all people except for children under five years old in areas classified as orange zones (high risk) or red zones (very high risk) must wear face masks in public places. Based on the human-to-human transmission of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, the ministry underlined that wearing face masks in public places such as theatres, cinemas, discos, restaurants, stadiums, parks, and bus stations is an effective measure to protect people's health, especially those with underlying diseases. Masks must be worn by people with symptoms of acute respiratory infection or suspected COVID-19. Wearing masks is also compulsory in medical facilities and accommodation hosting people undertaking medical quarantine or supervision, and for all medical staff. Patients isolated in single rooms, those suffering from respiratory failure or in need of medical treatment, and children under five years old will not have to wear masks. Medical face masks are compulsory on public transport. Passengers, drivers, service staff, managers and those working at railway stations, bus stations, docks, and airport terminals and in direct contact with passengers must wear face masks. At shopping malls, supermarkets, and wholesale markets, medical masks are no longer necessary for customers.

The use of face masks indoors is optional for customers in closed spaces such as discos, karaoke bars, massage and beauty service establishments, gyms, on-site food and drink catering, cinemas, theatres, circuses, and film studios. The same rule is applicable for customers and tourists at cultural and tourist sites, including museums, libraries, exhibitions, and galleries; crowded places such as physical training and sports events, weddings, funerals, festivals, and trade fairs; and public service offices. However, people working at these places and in direct contact with customers are still required to wear face coverings. The Ministry of Health has

requested health departments to coordinate with related units to guide the implementation of new rules, and inspect and handle cases of violations. Leaders of organisations, facilities, and areas of application of new rules on medical masks will take responsibility for the implementation of the rules. On August 12, the Ministry of Health proposed the Prime Minister not announce the end of the pandemic due to the unstable number of new infections and deaths around the world with new variant appearances. In Việt Nam, the number of cases tended to increase again recently with serious cases being under treatment.

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 09/08/2022*

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## **ADB Launches New Country Partnership Strategy for Viet Nam**

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has launched a new country partnership strategy (CPS) for Viet Nam covering the period 2023–2026. The strategy will help promote inclusive, green, and private sector-led development in Viet Nam and build a foundation for the country to achieve its goal of becoming upper middle-income by 2030. “Viet Nam has weathered the COVID-19 pandemic relatively well and is benefiting from strong economic fundamentals, robust trade and investment, and an ongoing digital transformation,” said ADB Country Director for Viet Nam Andrew Jeffries. “Notwithstanding the progress, Viet Nam faces multiple development challenges, including private sector competitiveness, the need for sustainable infrastructure financing, and vulnerability to climate change and natural hazards. This CPS is designed to position ADB as a reliable, relevant, and responsive partner to Viet Nam in its efforts to achieve green and private sector-led growth.”

ADB’s new partnership strategy for Viet Nam is anchored on the recognition that the country needs tailor-made solutions to best meet its development challenges. It also takes a provincial focus as this is where Viet Nam’s development needs are greatest. ADB will support Viet Nam in transitioning to a green economy and responding to the impacts of climate change. Under the partnership strategy, ADB will help Viet Nam review its framework to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. In addition, ADB will partner with Viet Nam in exploring innovative solutions to develop carbon markets and green finance, such as green bonds and a green finance facility to catalyze investments in sustainable infrastructure projects.

The strategy recognizes that a competitive private sector is critical to achieving high and sustained economic growth. To boost private sector-led growth, ADB will help advance state-owned enterprise reforms using a combination of nonsovereign loans and targeted technical assistance. ADB will also utilize its Trade Finance Program to help Vietnamese private sector firms integrate with global value chains and offer technical assistance for Viet Nam to operationalize its new Public–Private Partnership law. To build greater social equity in Viet Nam, ADB will support an expansion in public service delivery, especially in the health and education sectors.

In addition, ADB will assist the development of financial technology capacity to achieve greater financial inclusion in Viet Nam, and use financial intermediary loans to increase access to finance for women-owned businesses.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 09/09/2022

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## **Improving Agricultural Living Standards Central to New Resolution**

A new resolution on agriculture, farmers and rural areas will enhance the development to improve the living standards of farming households, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Lê Minh Hoan said at an online conference introducing Resolution No. 19-NQ/TW. The first key solution is to improve the role, position, ownership capability, and the lives of rural residents, he said. The minister said that the resolution promotes the role of farmers and considers them the centre of the development process. In the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and digital transformation, the resolution sets higher requirements in raising knowledge and awareness and ensuring farmers' ownership. Digital transformation is opening up a bright future for Vietnamese agriculture by applying new tools in production. At the meeting, the participants shared experiences and recommendations on shifting from agricultural production to an agricultural economy. Nguyễn Hồng Sơn, Director of the Vietnam Academy of Agricultural Sciences, said that it is necessary to restructure agriculture by applying science and technology. Agricultural development also creates conditions for the development of farmers and rural areas and vice versa.

The resolution stated that science and technology have the task of creating high-value products and breakthroughs and training high-quality human resources. The agency will coordinate with relevant units and businesses to transfer technological advances and train farmers, promoting the application of high technology in agriculture, increasing the value of products, and creating breakthroughs in the agriculture sector, Sơn said. Reports from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development said the ministry has built 1,669 supply chains of safe agro-forestry-fishery foods and checked post-harvest samples. As a result, food safety violations are low (from 1.6 to 2.5 per cent). Agricultural cooperatives also operate more effectively with an increase in the number of members and the application of technology in production and business. The number of "One Commune, One Product" (OCOP) products from three stars reached 8,340, creating favourable conditions for businesses to promote and consume their products. Based on the strengths and development potential of the locality, Vice Chairwoman of Bắc Kạn Provincial People's Committee Đỗ Thị Minh Hoa said the province is determined to build two main industries to become a national commodity; forestry and medicine. In Bắc Kạn, the forest land area accounts for more than 85 per cent of the province's area, with the highest forest coverage rate in the country at 73.4 per cent. Currently,

planted forests in the province do not yet bring high economic efficiency. To develop the forestry sector sustainably, the industry needs to have specific directions, such as planting trees under the forest canopy and prolonging the logging cycle. Forests are mainly assigned to organisations and households for management and protection, but the households' income from forest protection is not high. It is necessary to have policies to promote forest protection effectively, Hoa said.

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn> 09/09/2022*

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## **New Regulations on Importing Cars and Motorcycles for Non-Commercial Purposes**

The General Department of Taxation (GDT) recently requested tax departments in centrally-run cities and provinces to enhance tax administration for cars and motorcycles permitted to import or temporarily imported for non-commercial purposes. The GDT has asked tax departments to transfer dossiers to the police or work with authorised agencies to handle those who import and temporarily import or transfer cars and motorbikes for non-commercial purposes. However, they then announced plans to dissolve the companies and tax payments and declarations, or final settlements, had not yet been made. When making registration fees, tax departments are asked to work closely with tax authorities to keep track of organisations and individuals who transfer cars or motorcycles imported or temporarily imported for non-commercial purposes to determine their legal fulfilment of tax declaration and payment. The GDT has also required tax departments to assign their representatives who will be in charge of regularly exchanging and coordinating with local customs authorities and customs offices to conduct timely measures on tax management. In another development, the Ministry of Finance has just issued Circular No. 45/2022/TT-BTC amending and supplementing several articles in Circular No. 143/2015/TT-BTC regulating customs procedures and managing cars and motorbikes permitted to import or temporarily import for non-commercial purposes. Circular No.45/2022/TT-BT amends regulations on “Conditions for imported and temporarily imported cars and motorbikes.” The policy on managing imported or imported cars and motorbikes in the form of gifts, samples, and movable property shall comply with the Government and Prime Minister’s regulations. Circular 45/2022/TT-BTC takes effect from September 10, 2022.

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 09/10/2022*

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## **South Asia**

### **INDIA: With 5G in Mind, Punjab Brings Necessary Changes in Telecom Infrastructure Guidelines 2020**

The Punjab government led by Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann has decided to give



greater push in bringing necessary changes to make the state ready for 5G adoption in the state. Accordingly, the Cabinet also approved amendments in Telecom Infrastructure Guidelines 2020 in line with the Amendment in Rules 2021 of Indian Telegraph Right of Way Rules 2016, for setting up of Over Ground Telecommunication Infrastructure including setting up of Small Cells on Street Furniture in the State of Punjab, and Guidelines Regularization Towers 2022. This will allow provision for the usage of Street furniture for installation of new generation Small Cells to enable deployment of 5G/4G (Digital Infrastructure) roll out and for setting up Over the Ground Telecommunication thereby improving the means of communications and immensely benefitting the people of state.

From <https://egov.eletsonline.com> 09/27/2022

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## **UP Cabinet Clears Bioenergy Policy to Promote Production of Biofuels**

The Uttar Pradesh Cabinet on Tuesday cleared the bioenergy policy in an attempt to attract big-ticket investments and increase agriculture income in the state. The policy aims at supporting and promoting production of compressed biogas, bio-coal, ethanol and biodiesel in the state. The Cabinet also gave the go-ahead to the MSME (small and medium enterprises) policy that seeks to open and promote such units in all districts. "The bio-energy policy will help increase farm income by making better use of stubble and agricultural and sugar mill waste and promote rural employment by using organic waste for energy generation. Besides, it will also help make better use of urban waste," the government said in a statement. The policy has three components — compressed biogas plants, bio-diesel and bio-coal. The policy duration will be for five years to provide incentives on production. Subsidy of Rs 75 lakh per tonne (maximum Rs 20 crore) will be provided on compressed biogas production. In case of bio-coal production, a subsidy of Rs 75,000 per tonne (maximum Rs 20 crore) will be given. For biodiesel, a subsidy of Rs 3 lakh per kilolitre (maximum Rs 20 crore) will be provided. In all these cases, the subsidy would be 15 per cent of the total incurred cost. Applications would be sought at the district level for opening plants on land given by the government on a lease of 30 years, against a token amount of Rs 1. A committee will also be formed for aggregation of raw material or bio material from farmers, producer organisations or mandi samitis etc. In case of those engaged in aggregation work, the government will provide a 30 per cent subsidy on the purchase of machinery for collection, transportation and storage of the material. Stamp duty and power duty on such units will be exempted. Also, in case of units with an investment of Rs 50 crore or more, the government will construct at least 5-km approach road to the unit. A daily target of 1,000 tonne production has been set for compressed biogas with an approved subsidy of Rs 750 crore, the same is 4,000 tonne a day for bio-coal with a subsidy of Rs 30 crore. For bio-ethanol and bio-diesel, daily production target will be 2,000 with Rs 60 crore subsidy.

From <https://egov.eletsonline.com> 09/28/2022

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## Central-West Asia

### **AZERBAIJAN: Preparing Draft Law on Ensuring Personal Data Protection**

A draft law on ensuring personal data protection has been prepared in Azerbaijan, Chief of Special Communication and Information Security State Service of Azerbaijan Tural Mammadov said during the event on 'Cyber-secure economy: reforms, innovative approaches and solutions', Trend reports. According to him, this draft law is based on European standards of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). "I want to note that Azerbaijan has significantly ensured both protection of information and data as well as personal data over the recent years," Mammadov added.

From <https://en.trend.az> 09/21/2022

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### **Azerbaijan Sends Draft Law on Increasing Amount of VAT Refunds to Consumers to Cabinet of Ministers**

A draft law on increasing the number of VAT refunds to consumers has been sent to the Cabinet of Ministers of Azerbaijan, Deputy head of State Tax Service under the Ministry of Economy Samira Musayeva told Trend. "The draft law defines rules related to the increase of the number of VAT refunds to consumers," she said. During the meeting of Azerbaijani Parliament's (Milli Majlis) Committee on Economic Policy, Industry and Entrepreneurship Musayeva stated that it's planned to increase the number of VAT refunds to consumers next year. She stressed that the purpose of this was to encourage cashless payments. Currently, the amount of the VAT refund is 15 percent for cashless payments and 10 percent for cash payments. More than 305.5 million manat (\$179.7 million) was returned to consumers registered on the 'ƏDV geri al' portal for 732.1 million cash receipts until September 2022. And more than 133.6 million manat (\$78.5 million) was returned on 303.8 million cash receipts only from January through August 2022.

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### **KYRGYZSTAN: ADB Approves New Project to Support Development of Economy**

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$50-million project to improve the development of Kyrgyz economy, Trend reports citing the ADB's press service. Within the framework of this project, which consists of a \$25 million grant and a \$25

million concessional loan, the ADB will assist Kyrgyzstan in becoming more resilient to external shocks. "This program will help create an enabling environment for expanding the product and export base of Kyrgyzstan's economy. The reforms will improve economic opportunities through boosting trade, access to finance, and facilitating the growth of export-oriented businesses," ADB's Public Management Specialist Bobir Gafurov said. In addition, he also underlined that this project will support efforts to strengthen fiscal management and the social protection system. Notably, since 1994 the Asian Development Bank has allocated more than \$1.3 billion for the implementation of development projects in Kyrgyzstan.

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## **KAZAKHSTAN: Approving Plan on Implementation of State-of-Nation Address by President Tokayev**

The nationwide action plan program on implementation of State-of-the-Nation Address by President of Kazakhstan "A Fair State. One Nation. Prosperous Society" was approved at the session of the Parliament under the chairmanship of Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Alikhan Smailov, Trend reports citing the Kazakh government. Minister of National Economy of Kazakhstan Alibek Kuantyrov informed that the program provides for implementation of 109 activities in the following directions: new economic policy, development of the real sector, strategic investment in the country's future, resetting public administration, law and order. Thus, it's planned to launch 'Modernization of healthcare in rural regions' and develop measures to comprehensively improve medical infrastructure as a whole. As part of the 'Comfortable School' program schools with 800,000 student places will be build by 2025. Furthermore, legislative amendments will be adopted to introduce a moratorium on raising of retirement age of women, fixing it at 61 years, until 2028 and increasing childcare payment period to one and a half years as early as January 1, 2023.

The launch of 'National Fund for Children' program is awaited from January 1, 2024, within the framework of this program 50 percent of the National Fund's annual investment income is planned to be deposited in special saving account for children. The accumulated amount can be used at the age of 18 to to purchase housing and get education. Moreover, the adoption of the new law 'On public procurement' to improve the quality of purchased goods, works and services, restructure the activity of 'Samruk-Kazyna' fund, as well as take measure to improve the efficiency of SEZ special economic zones, the agro-industrial complex and the water industry is also planned. In addition, new Tax, Budget and Urban Planning Code will be prepared. Smailov noted that the submitted nation wide plan program covers all the tasks set by the President of Kazakhstan and is aimed at solving urgent problems of population and business.

This program will include the areas such as regulation of prices, tax and customs administration, simplification of budget processes, support of entrepreneurship, construction of highways, ensuring the rule of law and quality of administration of justice, enhancing the security of society. “Ensuring comprehensive and systematic measure on social development, healthcare and education is the most important part of the program. In general, its implementation will allow to ensure quality of economic development and increase the welfare of the population,” Smailov stressed. The government approved the submitted draft document of the program at the end of discussion. Prime Minister of Kazakhstan instructed all state bodies and akimats (administrations) to immediately start implementing the nationwide plan at the end of the session.

From <https://en.trend.az> 09/06/2022

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## **TURKMENISTAN: Plans to Create New Industrial Zone**

Turkmenistan plans to create a new industrial zone in the Ak Bugdai district of the Ahal region in the south of the country, Trend reports citing the State News Agency of Turkmenistan (TDH). This was announced by Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan Batyr Atdaev at a government meeting. In the new industrial zone, it is planned to build enterprises for the production of import-substituting and export products, and their commissioning will contribute to the creation of more than 10,000 new jobs. 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 implementation of import substitution programs and increasing the export potential of the state.

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## **Oceania**

### **NEW ZEALAND: Government Takes Action to Bring Down Youth**

The Government has announced a ‘Better Pathways’ package that aims to place more young people in education, training or work to drive down youth crime. “Youth crime is clearly an issue right now, particularly in Auckland. In response to this the Government is investing heavily in programmes that create opportunities for young people to break the cycle of crime,” Education and Police Minister Chris Hipkins said. “While youth crime is down on a decade ago, we’re seeing a spike of young people, even children, putting themselves and others in harm’s way through high-risk activities such as ram-raiding and smashing shops and we want that to stop.” Punishing young people through the criminal justice system more often than not sets them up for a life of adult crime. Insights from the Social Wellbeing Agency show that

preventing youth crime is important to preventing gang membership for young people.

Based on 2000 young people in their early 20s who are currently on Corrections' gang member list, they found that 100% of the cohort had contact with the Police and were reported as offenders one or more times across their lives. "Instead, we're ramping up our investment in young people to create even more opportunities for them to earn and learn," Chris Hipkins said. "We want to provide every young New Zealander with the chance to succeed. To do that we've identified youth focused programmes that are working already out in the community, and investing heavily to scale them up. "This package will help address complex and longer-term youth engagement issues that have been made more challenging by COVID-19. Frequent disruption has prevented some children and young people from accessing an education, while others are still struggling with the impacts of the pandemic on them and their families.

"Extending the Ākonga fund is an obvious step we can take. 2,663 young people have exited an Ākonga Fund programme and achieved an education, training or employment outcome and this extension will give an additional 2,750 young people the opportunity to get back on the right track. "We've recently announced our funded plan to improve school attendance, and today's package builds on that by including more localised support to keep young people in school. "Part of this package is designed to help keep young people out of the justice system where Police and partner agencies believe this approach is warranted. But I want to be clear, young offenders committing serious crimes will continue to be dealt with seriously. This is about a second chance for those that merit it; it's not a free pass," Chris Hipkins said. Social Development Minister Carmel Sepuloni said the South Auckland Social Wellbeing Board's 'Kotahi te Whakaaro' approach is already paying dividends and so is pleased to announce it is extending to West Auckland.

"Over the past four months all children under the age of 14 who were apprehended as a result of a fleeing driver or ram raid or other serious offending in Counties Manukau have been referred to the board who can provide wrap-around support and refer them on to other programmes in order to steer them away from crime. As a result three quarters have not reoffended," Carmel Sepuloni said. "The success of this initiative in South Auckland is why we are extending it into West Auckland where a cross-agency team involving government agencies like MSD, Police and Oranga Tamariki, as well as local NGOs, respond directly to the needs of the children and young people who have offended." "Through this approach they are tackling family harm and violence in the home, working with schools on responses to psychological distress and trauma experienced by children, and embedding engagement with iwi into their mahi."

The package also sees an extension to He Poutama Rangatahi, another

employment, education and training programme that has proven to work. “Ensuring our children and young people have access to pathways into employment, education and training remains a priority for our Government. This extends to those who may need a little bit more support to get back on the right track, and He Poutama Rangatahi has proven to be a successful programme that breaks down barriers to work for some of our hardest to reach young people,” Carmel Sepuloni said. “Having supported over 3,500 people already, He Poutama Rangatahi will continue to have a critical role to play in working with young people at risk of participating, or already participating, in youth crime, and on reducing involvement with gangs,”

“We have chosen to back solutions and build on what is working for young people right now. It means we can tackle youth crime by getting those who have already offended or are at risk of offending the support they need, while also ensuring these successful approaches are embedded in the way Government does things in the long term, so we can make changes for the better,” Carmel Sepuloni said.

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 09/06/2022

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## **Government Law Changes to Enable Faster Consenting, More Prefabs, Comes into Force**

Law changes that introduce a new voluntary certification scheme for modular component, or prefab, manufacturers, and strengthen New Zealand’s building product certification scheme have come into force today, Minister for Building and Construction and Housing, Megan Woods says. “This Government’s top priority is to secure our economy for New Zealanders and to help our businesses thrive. That’s why we’re constantly looking at creating efficiencies to boost construction, reduce building costs, and generate less waste. “These schemes both enable faster consenting of quality assured homes and buildings. Greater use of prefab methods and products will help us to keep up momentum to deliver the homes New Zealand needs and bring costs down,” said Megan Woods.

The new BuiltReady scheme will allow offsite building manufacturers who meet certain requirements to become certified to sign off their own designs and/or construction. BuiltReady modular components will be deemed to comply with the Building Code. “Homes made offsite benefit from lower building costs, experience less delays, and significantly produce less construction waste which we know is dominating our landfills in New Zealand. BuiltReady gives manufacturers the option of a streamlined consenting pathway specifically designed for their needs. “The changes to CodeMark will provide assurance that those evaluating and certifying products are doing their jobs well. This will help to grow confidence and uptake in the scheme that creates consenting efficiencies for buildings that use innovative or higher-risk products,” Megan Woods said. The law changes for the BuiltReady scheme and revised CodeMark scheme take effect today. The BuiltReady scheme

will be open for applications from certification bodies in late 2022 and open for applications from manufacturers in 2023

Notes to Editor BuiltReady and the changes to CodeMark were passed as part of the Building (Building Products and Methods, Modular Components, and Other Matters) Amendment Act 2021 alongside provisions for new building product information requirements. The new building product information requirements will come into force in December 2023. These law changes will require a minimum level of information to be made publicly available about building products, including how they are expected to contribute to compliance with the Building Code and how they should be used. The building product certification scheme, known as CodeMark, is a voluntary scheme that allows building products and building methods to be certified as meeting the requirements of the Building Code. Building consent authorities must accept a CodeMark certificate as evidence of compliance with the Building Code.

The changes include new Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) registration requirements for product certification bodies and fully revised scheme rules to give MBIE better oversight of the scheme. The registration fee for certificates of \$180.30 (excl GST) is applicable to any new certificates issued after 7 September 2022. This will only apply to new CodeMark certificates and not revisions of current certificates. MBIE is developing training and guidance information for certification bodies, technical experts, assessors, and industry stakeholders so all scheme participants understand the new scheme requirements and transitional arrangements. MBIE has also developed new scheme rules, which provide the detail for scheme participants about their roles and responsibilities, the operating process and the evaluation criteria.

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 09/07/2022

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## **Research Projects Set to Tackle NZs Biggest Challenges**

The Government has announced funding for 71 scientific research projects that seek to address some of our biggest challenges such as climate change, Research, Science and Innovation Minister Dr Ayesha Verrall announced today. “The Endeavour Fund provides investment in projects will help build a productive, sustainable and inclusive economy to improve the wellbeing of all living in New Zealand. “The Government is focused on building a productive, sustainable and inclusive economy, and the projects we are announcing today play a key role in helping to deliver that,” Dr Verrall said. “We’re supporting and investing in research which will have future potential economic benefits as well as addressing some of our biggest challenges such as climate change.

“Some of the successful projects include developing new technology to reduce geothermal carbon emissions, forecasting future threats such as volcanic eruptions

and earthquakes and utilising AI to make future weather and climate projections”, Dr Verrall said. “As well as finding ways to protect Māui dolphins from toxoplasmosis, creating soilless precision farming via ultraclean water production, zero-emissions removal of nitrate from wastewater and using robotic fish to enable effective coastal kaitiakitanga. Another priority for the fund is to support Vision Mātauranga, which aims to unlock the science and innovation potential of Māori knowledge. “Our research priorities include tackling long-standing social issues, transitioning into low emissions and climate resilience, and building a more knowledge-intensive economy. “The science and innovation community are coming up with solutions to tackle some of our most important issues, this funding will help them to carry out their important work. The Endeavour Fund is New Zealand’s largest contestable funding system to select excellent research proposals that will provide the highest potential impacts across a range of economic, environmental and societal objectives to transform our future. \$236.5 million has been allocated in this funding round to 71 projects.

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## **Infrastructure Strategy Sets a Course for the Future**

The Government has tabled its response to Te Waihanga/New Zealand Infrastructure Commission’s first infrastructure strategy. Published in June, Rautaki Hanganga o Aotearoa – New Zealand Infrastructure Strategy 2022–2052 set out the infrastructure challenges and opportunities facing New Zealand over the next 30 years. “A system that provides quality infrastructure assets and services is vital to address the long-term issues that will shape our future, including climate change, housing affordability, productivity, and child poverty,” Grant Robertson said. “This Government has already shown its commitment to address New Zealand’s infrastructure challenges. We have committed to a further \$61.9 billion of infrastructure investment over the next five years.

“We will continue to focus our infrastructure investment on projects that support our priority areas, maintain essential services, and provide the greatest value in improving New Zealanders’ wellbeing. “In the document tabled today the Government works through in detail each of the 68 recommendations in the report and our response to them. “In many cases the strategy highlights work that is already underway. In others it asks us to go further. The next step will be a detailed Action Plan and Reporting Programme that all stakeholders will be able to use to monitor our progress on implementation. “The infrastructure strategy is a blueprint for a new and exciting programme of infrastructure work. We look forward to putting it into action with all who are interested in helping build the future shape of our nation,” Grant Robertson said.

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## **Government Introduces DIRA Amendment Bill**

An Amendment Bill introduced to Parliament today will provide greater economic security for New Zealanders by supporting Fonterra's move to a new capital structure which will reduce long-term risks to New Zealand's \$22.1 billion dairy sector, Agriculture Minister Damien O'Connor said. "The Dairy Industry Restructuring (Fonterra Capital Restructuring) Amendment (DIRA) Bill supports the Fonterra co-operative's move to its new capital structure, and sets the foundations for the continued future success of our highest value export sector," Damien O'Connor said. "New Zealand dairy farmers are world-leading and the Fonterra co-operative has been a central part of this. "We believe this Bill strikes the right balance between supporting Fonterra's shareholder mandate while taking the opportunity to improve transparency in the sector.

"Long-term sustainability, fair pricing in the domestic market and value creation in New Zealand's dairy industry is part of the balance we are aiming for. The past two decades have seen new entrants bring competitive innovation to the industry and we want to see that continue. "Our dairy industry's continued success is vital to both New Zealand's ongoing economic recovery, and protecting New Zealanders from the sharp edges of a global economic downturn." The Bill's key risk mitigation measures were developed following consultation with industry, and will: Improve the transparency and robustness of Fonterra's base milk price-setting arrangements by increasing the number of Ministerial nominees to Fonterra's Milk Price Panel from one to two. Require the Chair of Fonterra's Milk Price Panel to be fully independent of Fonterra, and appointed only with the approval of the Minister.

Give the Commerce Commission the power to issue binding directions to Fonterra on matters arising from its reviews of Fonterra's Milk Price Manual and base milk price calculation. Support liquidity and transparency in the trade of Fonterra shares in its restricted farmer-only market by, for example, requiring Fonterra to engage a designated market maker(s) and make independent financial markets analysis of its performance accessible to farmers and unit holders. Support Fonterra's ability to access internal capital for investment in innovation, by requiring Fonterra to maintain and publish a dividend and retentions policy. "It's important the Amendment Bill proceeds quickly to give certainty to Fonterra, farmers and the wider dairy sector," Damien O'Connor said.

"The Bill's first reading will take place later this month, and I expect the Select Committee stages of the legislative change process to take place this year. This will provide the opportunity for the dairy sector and public to provide further comment and input. "The benefits of a high-performing and efficient Fonterra flow through its nearly 10,000 farmer-shareholders into our rural communities. "This Bill will play an important part in the ongoing resilience and prosperity of rural New Zealand," Damien O'Connor said.

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 09/13/2022

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## **New Strategy Marks Next Step in NZ's Digital Journey**

A strategy which sets out New Zealand's vision and plan for harnessing the potential of the digital economy has been unveiled today. "Te Rautaki Matihiko mō Aotearoa – The Digital Strategy for Aotearoa will be New Zealand's trusty roadmap, as we navigate an increasingly digital world," Minister for the Digital Economy and Communications, David Clark said. "The strategy unveiled today provides an overarching framework for how we want to shape New Zealand's digital future. It revolves around three key pillars: Mahi Tika – Trust, Mahi Tahī – Inclusion and Mahi Ake – Growth. "Last year we engaged with a wide range of groups and people during public consultation, to help refine the final strategy. We've ended up with a document that is well informed and incredibly ambitious.

"We have set targets to have fewer cyber incidents than comparable countries, high-speed internet available to all New Zealanders and to have the digital and ICT sector on track to becoming the country's leading export earner. "The strategy will continue to evolve with technology, adapting to include new issues and opportunities as they arrive. "The digital technologies sector has shown it can contribute significantly to the country's economic growth. Between 2015 and 2020, the sector grew 77% faster than the overall economy. In 2020 alone, it contributed \$7.4 billion to the economy. "Technology has also helped glue our communities back together throughout the depths of the COVID-19 restrictions. At a time when we couldn't be there for each other in person, we had to learn how to work, learn and socialise from our homes," David Clark said.

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 09/14/2022

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## **New Strategy Unifies All-of-Government Approach to Help Pacific Languages Thrive**

A united approach across all-of-Government underpins the new Pacific Language Strategy, announced by the Minister for Pacific Peoples Aupito William Sio at Parliament today. "The cornerstone of our Pacific cultures, identities and place in Aotearoa, New Zealand are our Pacific languages. They are at the heart of our wellbeing," Aupito William Sio said. "They are spiritual gifts, unique to Aotearoa and the Pacific region. They give us a point of difference and a competitive advantage in the workplace and economy. "This Strategy demonstrates the Government's commitment to reverse the declining use of Pacific languages in Aotearoa New Zealand, and ensures Pacific languages thrive and prosper for the sake of future generations' wellbeing." The Strategy will be implemented through a Pacific Languages Government Action Plan and ethnic-specific Community Language

Action Plans.

Minister Sio said it will take a long-term approach to supporting Pacific languages across Pacific communities', Government agencies and other key stakeholders. "An alarming trend has emerged in the past several decades showing the use of Pacific languages is in decline, and many are in danger of being lost. "But we are not alone in this journey, and we acknowledge indigenous languages globally, including tangata whenua of Aotearoa, experiencing the journey of loss and hope in championing te reo Māori. "I am keenly aware of many Pacific young people who whakapapa Māori, and we have a collective responsibility in our families to encourage and support this generation – Generation 6Bs – to be confident and comfortable in both te reo Māori and their heritage Pacific language." The Government's Pacific Languages Strategy 2022 – 2032 was launched at Parliament today in a cultural ceremony which included Minister Sio gifting the strategy to youth leaders.

It is founded on three key objectives: To recognise the value of Pacific languages in Aotearoa

To strengthen pathways and resources for learning, and learning in, Pacific languages To see Pacific languages used more often and, in more spaces. "Our Pacific languages are a taonga for our people and I am calling on our communities to embrace this strategy and to help ensure our reo can be strengthened, celebrated and passed on for many generations to come. "When Pacific languages are heard, spoken, and celebrated, Pacific communities thrive; and when our Pacific communities thrive, Aotearoa is a better place for all of us. As the home to one of the largest Pacific populations in the world, New Zealand is well-placed to support Pacific languages to thrive." The first comprehensive language survey of its kind in Aotearoa, the Leo Moana o Aotearoa project is also being launched alongside the Pacific Languages Strategy.

It provides a clear picture of Pacific language use and attitudes across all regions, ages, and ethnic groups. This project will be repeated every four years to monitor progress of the Pacific Languages Strategy, and to help to determine where to direct new investment in Pacific languages. "We have seen through COVID-19 that Pacific languages are fundamental to the survival of Pacific communities. "Evidence tells us that when our people are strong in their languages, as well as English, they are more likely to be strong mentally, culturally, academically and economically," Aupito William Sio said.

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## 2、 Government System and Civil Services

## Asia-Pacific

### **Building Mutual Trust and Improving Communications Between Tax Administrations and Business Is Critical for Improving Voluntary Compliance**

Effective taxation of large businesses would benefit from increased efforts to build trust and improve communication between tax administrations and Multinational Enterprises (MNEs), according to a new report from the OECD. Tax Morale II: Building Trust between Tax Administrations and Large Businesses reflects the results of a wide-ranging survey of over 1,200 tax officials from 138 jurisdictions on MNE behaviour and tax compliance. As the international community prepares for the implementation of a new global minimum tax, the results provide an important snapshot of current levels of trust and transparency—factors that will underpin the success of the new international tax rules. The survey shows that while MNEs are generally seen to demonstrate a formal commitment to co-operation with tax administrations, notably through on-time payment, perceptions of MNE transparency and trust in the information provided by them are less positive. There are strong regional differences, with tax administrations' perceptions of MNE behaviour generally poorer in Latin America and the Caribbean, and to a lesser extent Africa, when compared with Asia and OECD countries.

The survey also reflects tax administrations' perceptions of the behaviour of the Big Four professional services networks (Deloitte, EY, KPMG, PricewaterhouseCoopers) on tax matters. It shows similar patterns of positive perceptions of their willingness to follow the letter of the law and formal compliance, but less positive perceptions of following the spirit of tax laws. The report combines tax administration perceptions of MNEs with previous research on MNE perceptions of tax administrations to identify a range of possible actions to help build more trust and effective relationships between tax administrations and business, with the aim of fostering more responsible business conduct in the tax area. These include increasing accountability for behaviour of both businesses and tax administrations (such as through voluntary principles set out by business and taxpayer charters), supporting the development of co-operative compliance relationships, and more simply focusing on making communication easier to reduce misunderstandings.

The report focuses in particular on the challenges faced by developing countries, which are striving to increase revenues to help meet the UN Sustainable Development Goals. With many developing countries being more reliant on both corporation tax and MNEs than other countries, fostering responsible business conduct in the tax area is especially important in developing countries. "While there are many factors that can influence MNE tax compliance, trust and the relationship between tax administrations and taxpayers is a useful place to start," said Grace Perez-Navarro, Deputy Director of the OECD Centre for Tax Policy and

Administration. "This new OECD work puts forward a range of actions to help both tax administrations and businesses improve communication and build the trust that is necessary to discourage aggressive tax planning and bring about more effective voluntary compliance."

To access the report, visit [www.oecd.org/tax/tax-morale-ii-7587f25c-en.htm](http://www.oecd.org/tax/tax-morale-ii-7587f25c-en.htm).

Media queries should be directed to Grace Perez-Navarro, Deputy Director of the OECD Centre for Tax Policy and Administration (+33 1 45 24 18 80), Joseph Stead, Senior Policy Analyst, Global Relations and Development Division (+33 1 45 24 79 39) or the OECD Media Office (+33 1 45 24 97 00). 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/> 09/05/2022

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## East Asia

### **CHINA: Senior CPC Official Urges New Horizons for Ideological and Political Work**

Huang Kunming, a senior Communist Party of China (CPC) official, on Tuesday called for efforts to open new horizons for ideological and political work in the new era. Huang, a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and head of the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee, made the remarks while addressing a convention of the Chinese Society of Ideological and Political Work in Beijing. Huang listed progress in the area since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, recognizing important contributions to the cause of the Party and the country. Ideological questions and practical problems should be solved in an integrated manner, Huang said, asking for efforts to inspire officials and the public to write a new chapter in building China into a modern socialist country in all respects.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 09/20/2022

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### **CPC Makes Steady Strides in Advancing Law-based Governance**

"Every citizen is entitled to the rights and at the same time must perform the duties prescribed by the Constitution and other laws." On Dec. 3, 2021, students of Shanxi Agricultural University (Taigu Campus), under the guidance of their teachers, recited the Constitution in a morning recitation marking National Constitution Day, which falls on Dec. 4 every year. This was among the activities held in various forms across the country to promote public awareness of the Constitution during the yearly "Constitution Awareness Week." The Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee has included comprehensively advancing law-based governance as a part of China's Four-pronged Comprehensive Strategy for building socialism with

Chinese characteristics since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012. The other three prongs are building a modern socialist country, deepening reform, and strengthening Party self-governance. Over the years, the central Party leadership has acted with resolve and intensity as never before to comprehensively advance law-based governance.

### **TOP-LEVEL DESIGN**

"Passed!" On May 28, 2020, the lawmakers at the Great Hall of the People broke into long applause as the Civil Code was adopted by the legislature. Hailed as "a declaration of the people's rights in the new era," the law marks a landmark achievement in terms of advancing law-based governance and is of great significance to accelerating the building of a socialist country based on the rule of law. Over the past 10 years, the CPC Central Committee has combined top-level design with the practice of rule by law. The plan on developing the rule of law in China (2020-2025), the implementation outline for building a law-based government (2021-2025), and the implementation outline for building a society based on the rule of law (2020-2025), have been rolled out. They set the grand blueprint, roadmap, and construction drawings for advancing the rule of law in all respects in the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-2025), putting in place a general pattern for comprehensively advancing law-based governance.

### **GOOD LAWS FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE**

The Yangtze finless porpoise, a rotund creature with its mouth fixed in a permanent grin, is known in China as a "smiling angel." Porpoises in groups spyhopping above the surface of the Yangtze River is now a usual summer scene again at the lower reaches of the Gezhouba Dam in central China's Yichang City, due to enhanced ecological protection efforts underpinned by the enforcement of the Yangtze River Protection Law. Accelerated legislation for environmental protection over the past decade has boosted China's ecological and environmental governance. The National People's Congress and its standing committee have formulated a total of 70 laws, revised 238 laws, passed 99 decisions on legal questions and other major issues, and issued nine legal interpretations since the 18th CPC National Congress. To improve law-based governance, it is crucial to safeguard judicial impartiality. The country's judicial organs have followed the principle of seeking truth from facts and correcting any mistakes, resulting in the correction of wrongful convictions of criminal cases in accordance with laws over the past decade.

### **PEOPLE-CENTERED APPROACH**

The central Party leadership has, since the 18th CPC National Congress, upheld a people-centered approach, safeguarded the rights and interests of the people, and guaranteed the people's sense of fulfillment, happiness, and security with the rule of law. Progress has been made on deepening reforms to streamline administration, delegate powers, improve regulation, and upgrade services. Efforts have been made to scrap redundant certification requirements and strengthen the provision of legal

aid for people in difficulties and safeguard their legitimate rights. For example, the implementation of a case docketing and registration system further solves the difficulties of case filing, with an average on-the-spot case registration rate of 95.7 percent as of June 2022. The law-based governance has empowered economic and social development, elevating China's governance to a higher level.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 09/21/2022

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## **National Political Advisors Review Regulations for CPC's Political Consultation Work**

The National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) met on Wednesday to study the regulations on the Communist Party of China's (CPC's) work regarding political consultation. The regulations were developed from the rich practices and successful experiences of the Party's work on political consultation since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, and they serve as fundamental guidelines for improving political consultation, said Wang Yang, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and chairman of the CPPCC National Committee who presided over and addressed the meeting. Having studied the regulations for three months, political advisors have recognized that efforts should be made to more effectively turn the Party's propositions, principles and policies into a broad consensus among political parties and people from all ethnic groups and walks of life who participated in the people's political consultative conferences, he said. The leading Party members groups of the CPPCC should consciously implement the Party's leadership over political consultation at people's political consultative conferences, he said. Wang stressed the importance of efforts to improve education and training, regulate the CPPCC's consultation procedures, and enhance capacity building, so as to ensure that the CPC Central Committee's policies and decisions regarding political consultation are faithfully implemented.

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## **Xi Stresses New Horizons for Strengthening Armed Forces Through Reform**

President Xi Jinping has stressed better use of successful experience in the reform of national defense and the armed forces and striving for new horizons for strengthening the armed forces through reform. Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), made the instruction to a seminar on the reform of national defense and the armed forces, which was held in Beijing Wednesday. The CPC Central Committee and the CMC have fully implemented the strategy of

strengthening the armed forces through reform with unprecedented determination and efforts since the Party's 18th National Congress, Xi said. Long-standing systemic obstructions, structural incongruities and policy issues in the development of national defense and the armed forces have been resolved, while historical achievements have been made in deepening the reform of national defense and the armed forces, Xi added. Xi demanded earnest summarization and application of successful experience in past reforms, understanding of the new situation and missions, and a focus on combat readiness. Xi also urged pioneering and innovative efforts to implement reform tasks and strengthen planning on future reforms, so as to provide strong impetus for achieving the goal set for the centenary of the People's Liberation Army.

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## **NPC Standing Committee's Inspection Team Meets on Foreign Investment Law**

The National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee's inspection team on the enforcement of the Foreign Investment Law Thursday held the second plenary session to review and discuss a report on the inspection work. Vice chairpersons of the NPC Standing Committee Wan Exiang, Chen Zhu, Wang Dongming, and Padma Choling attended the meeting. After listening to relevant reports, Chen said the inspection achieved positive results as it focused on primary issues and challenging difficulties and prompted the solid implementation of related legal provisions. In the next step, the inspection team should carefully study and adopt suggestions on improving the law's enforcement and track the progress of follow-up rectification, Chen said. Chen also urged more efforts to implement the Foreign Investment Law to foster a market-oriented and law-based international business environment.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 09/29/2022

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## **JAPAN: To Shorten COVID Isolation Period, Simplify Nationwide Case Count System**

Japan's government has decided to shorten the self-isolation period for coronavirus patients and simplify the national system for counting new cases. Prime Minister Kishida Fumio exchanged views about coronavirus measures with health minister Kato Katsunobu and other relevant ministers on Tuesday. They decided that the self-isolation period for symptomatic patients will be shortened from the current 10 days to seven. The period for asymptomatic people is to be cut from seven days to five as long as they test negative. The government also plans to shift to a simplified nationwide total case count system on September 26. It will require the details of only patients who are at risk of becoming seriously ill to be reported. Final adjustments



are underway to ease the restrictions on the movement of patients who are recuperating at home. Patients who have had light symptoms for more than 24 hours or asymptomatic people will be allowed to make necessary outings, such as to buy groceries. But they must wear masks and take other precautions against spreading the virus. The government plans to hear views from experts before officially approving such measures.

From <https://www3.nhk.or.jp> 09/06/2022

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## **Japan to Set Up Panel for Promoting Nuclear Fusion Development**

Japan's government says it will set up an expert panel to promote the development of nuclear fusion, which is seen as a next-generation source of energy, with plans to present a concrete strategy around next April. Economic Security Minister Takaichi Sanae told reporters on Tuesday that the panel will include experts on nuclear fusion technology and those who work in the industry. They will discuss when to start proving tests for power generation by nuclear fusion, how to grow the industry, and how to promote development. Takaichi said there is hope for nuclear fusion power as a clean energy source, and that international competition is accelerating. She also said Japan will consider its strategy for research and development, as well as how to grow the industry.

Nuclear fusion is a reaction that happens inside the sun and other stars. Massive amounts of energy can potentially be extracted by artificially creating such reactions, without producing carbon dioxide or high-level radioactive waste. A large experimental facility is being built under an international project called ITER, involving Japan, the United States, the European Union and others. Venture firms and China have also launched development projects, making the competition more intense. But many technical challenges remain. There are no concrete projections yet for when nuclear fusion will be put to practical use.

From <https://www3.nhk.or.jp> 09/14/2022

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## **Japan Farm Ministry to Set Up Model Decarbonization Zones**

Japan's agriculture ministry is setting up a series of zones to test innovative decarbonization methods. The aim is to help the country's farmers cut emissions of greenhouse gases such as methane from livestock waste. Farming accounts for more than 4 percent of Japan's total greenhouse-gas emissions. These include carbon dioxide from burning fuel for greenhouses, as well as methane from livestock burps and excrement. The agriculture ministry says it will designate 50 locations nationwide by 2024 as model areas for using advanced methods to reduce the carbon footprint. The ministry plans to make it easier for the areas to receive

subsidies. It aims to promote the use of livestock waste as compost, and organic farming to reduce reliance on chemical fertilizers which emit greenhouse gases when they are produced. Officials also aim to tap the power of information technology to improve agricultural efficiency.

From <https://www3.nhk.or.jp> 09/28/2022

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## **SOUTH KOREA: Presidential Committee on 'Digital Platform Gov't' Comes into Being**

A presidential committee on 'digital platform government' came officially into being Friday with an initiative to create a data-based digital platform where the government could join hands with the public and firms to solve social problems. President Yoon Suk-yeol attended the ceremony held at the presidential office Friday morning to launch the committee and discussed its future tasks with committee members, according to officials. A key election pledge of Yoon, the envisioned digital platform government is aimed at providing tailored government services and accomplishing the government administration based on artificial intelligence and data technologies by removing partitions between government agencies and disclosing public data to the private sector. Koh Jean, the chairperson of the Korea Metaverse Industry Association, has been appointed as the first chair of the newly launched committee composed of a total of 23 members, including 19 from private digital technology sectors, like AI, data and digital security.

The finance, science, and interior ministers, and the chief of the Personal Information Protection Committee have also joined the committee as members. During their discussion with Yoon, Committee Chairman Koh pledged to pursue four main tasks, including setting up an innovative infrastructure for the envisioned government platform and innovating the government administration by harnessing AI and data technologies. The committee plans to come up with a detailed plan of tasks to be pursued by the first quarter of 2023.

From <https://en.yna.co.kr> 09/02/2022

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## **South-East Asia**

### **THAILAND: Court to Decide Prayut's PM Term Limit on Sept. 30**

Thailand's Constitutional Court announced on Wednesday that it is set to rule on the case of Prayut Chan-o-cha's term limit as prime minister on Sept. 30. "The court has sufficient evidence to make a ruling," the Constitutional Court said in a statement released Wednesday, adding that examination has been ended and the court is scheduled to issue the decision on Sept. 30. The statement was issued after the court held a meeting Wednesday to discuss the case. Last month, judges of the court

agreed by five votes to four to suspend the premiership of Prayut, effective on Aug. 24, following a petition filed by the opposition parties for a ruling on when Prayut's eight-year tenure should conclude, which the opposition parties believed should have ended. The opposition parties also urged Prayut to step down. During the period, Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwon has been serving as the interim prime minister. Prayut was selected as the interim prime minister after a 2014 coup and was later royally endorsed as the 29th prime minister of the country on Aug. 25, 2014. Prayut's supporters argue that the clock on his tenure should begin when the 2017 constitution was instituted, or even after the 2019 general election when Prayut was elected as the prime minister.

*From <https://english.news.cn> 09/14/2022*

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## **VIETNAM: Authentication System to Prevent Counterfeiting Via QRCode Put into Operation**

The Việt Nam E-commerce and Digital Economy Agency (iDEA), under the Ministry of Industry and Trade, has put into operation a system of authenticating genuine goods via QRCode at [truyxuat.gov.vn](http://truyxuat.gov.vn), to encourage people and businesses to use solutions to develop products in e-commerce transactions. According to Đỗ Đình Tấn, from iDEA, the authentication system provides the ability to retrieve information about product origin for consumers when purchasing products. This will provide consumers with enough information about the origin of products and allow businesses to clarify product information, which helps solve the problem of counterfeit goods and creates great opportunities for the application of digital technologies. In particular, it helps create trust in users through knowing the origin of the purchased product. "Building a software system for authenticating genuine goods on mobile devices with static QRCode and dynamic QRCode software systems contributes to ending the fear of counterfeit goods and imitation goods of businesses with the support of technology," said Tấn. "This software will fight all forms of counterfeiting, protect products comprehensively, and immediately warn businesses and customers of counterfeit goods by limiting scans of genuine stamps with clear management between factories, producers and distributors."

In addition, through the retrieval system, businesses and consumers can easily connect with each other about warranty process information and business promotions programmes, according to Tấn. In particular, dynamic QRCode technology on the system "[truyxuat.gov.vn](http://truyxuat.gov.vn)" is strictly managed, ensuring security with both a genuine authentication function and an anti-counterfeit function and limiting the number of times it can be accessed. Therefore, building a system to authenticate genuine goods through the QRCode of the Ministry of Industry and Trade helps control risks arising when tracking and verifying the origin of goods. This is not only a step for businesses to create trust for customers, but also a "wall" to protect the reputation of products and businesses. This will also help businesses

conquer the international market, which requires a very strict system of authenticating goods through QRCode of goods in both production and trade. For State management agencies, it is also a useful tool for the management and control of the commodity market.

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 09/13/2022*

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## **PM Emphasises Importance of Planning Work**

Prime Minister Phạm Minh Chính emphasised the importance of detailed planning work at a meeting of an evaluation council for the national master plan in 2021-2030 with a vision to 2050 in Hà Nội on Wednesday. “Planning plays an important role in development,” he said, adding that the national master plan for Việt Nam at this time is difficult as it is the first-ever national master plan which concretised the orientations outlined by the 13th National Party Congress and other documents of the Party Central Committee. He said that first of all, it is necessary to make clear the differences between the plan with other ten-year development strategies or five-year national socio-economical development programmes. The formulation of the master plan must adhere to the guidelines, policies and laws of the Party and State, including the Law on Planning, he said, urging planners to make it feasible, effective, “easy to read, easy to remember, easy to do, easy to evaluate and easy to monitor and test”. With innovative thinking and strategic vision, the national master plan must clearly identify the country’s distinctive potential, opportunities and competitive edges, working out suitable solutions to optimise all resources, the Government leader said. He also underlined the feasibility of the master plan, adding that for this reason, the evaluation of the draft master plan is all the more important.

The evaluation council for the national master plan was set up last month under the PM’s Decision 965/QĐ-TTg with Deputy Prime Minister Lê Văn Thành as its chairman. Minister of Planning and Investment Nguyễn Chí Dũng said the national master plan is the first of its kind that was drafted in accordance with the 2017 Planning Law. “Developing the planning is a new, very important, difficult, complex, unprecedented task that we do not have much experience,” Dũng said, adding that it was also a great opportunity for Việt Nam to comprehensively re-evaluate conditions for national development and then identify spaces, roadmaps and resources for the development. Dũng said that during the drafting process, the ministry coordinated with 16 ministries and sectors to develop the National Master Plan Orientation Report which includes opinions, objectives and priority orientations for development). The report has been discussed and commented on many times by the Standing Government, the Government, and the Government Party Committee. On that basis, the Ministry of Planning and Investment coordinated with ministries and sectors to build 41 planning components. They studied, integrated and completed a draft National Master Plan Report.

The ministry also coordinated with the World Bank to hold numerous discussions with the participation of domestic and international experts. The draft has also been published on the ministry's portal for public feedback. Members of evaluation council agreed on forming and prioritising economic corridors and industrial belts and main urban centres. Accordingly, the master plan focuses on forming economic corridors along the North-South axis and East-West direction which is based on locations of highways, railways, seaports, international airports, international border gates, urban areas, and economic hubs. Industrial and urban belts around Hà Nội and HCM City associated with international gateways will be given priority to develop. The members also agreed with breakthroughs in infrastructure development which prioritises the development of transport infrastructure networks, including urban transport in Hà Nội and HCM City, energy, and telecommunications in association with forming economic corridors and building synchronous and modern infrastructure in the driving force areas and growth poles of key economic regions.

Growth pole refers to the concentration of highly innovative and technically advanced industries that stimulate economic development in linked businesses and industries. These concentrations of industries often affect the economies of geographical areas outside their immediate regions. The evaluation council agreed with the point of view, that the main ideology of the National Master Plan that is by 2030, investment should be effectively and concentratedly on key areas. Then, the investment would be gradually given to ensure harmony, sustainability and balance among regions and localities by 2050. It is necessary to concentrate on developing the growth driving areas and growth poles. Specifically, in the northern key economic region, the driving force area is the triangle of Hà Nội - Hải Phòng - Quảng Ninh, in which, the capital Hà Nội is the growth pole. In the southern key economic region, the growth driving area is the quadrangle of HCM City - Bình Dương - Đồng Nai and Bà Rịa - Vũng Tàu, in which HCM City is the growth pole.

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 09/15/2022*

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## **Ministry Examines Ways to Convince Public Sector Workers Not to Quit**

As public sector workers continue to leave their jobs in droves, Minister of Home Affairs Phạm Thị Thanh Trà has called for suggestions to stem the tide. The Government, ministries and localities have introduced many policies to support public sector workers. However, it has not been enough to stop many public employees from resigning. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA) suggested improvements must be made in the working environment regarding professionalism, modernity, competition, and opportunities for professional development. The MOHA will provide supportive policies for public employees with difficult economic circumstances, building a system of capable and reputable leaders and managers to organise their work well. All will aim at creating trust and encouraging public

employees to work. Ministries should renew the arrangement and use of public employees to create conditions for them to develop, especially early in their careers. They should also support public employees to participate in further training to improve their qualifications and working capacity. Concerned organisations should have adequate policies to serve the employees' professional development. The MOHA emphasised political and ideological education for public employees, creating peace of mind to work in the state sector. Agencies must continue to innovate working methods and administrative reform, improve the effectiveness and efficiency of state management, accelerate digital transformation, and apply information technology in public service activities. The MOHA requested the Ministry of Education and Training and the Ministry of Health, which have seen many public workers departing, analyse the situation, clarify the causes and propose solutions to build a system of public employees meeting task requirements in the new situation. The MOHA will continue to research and advise competent authorities to implement wage reform policy following the Politburo's direction. In the letter, the MOHA committed to proposing policies to attract talents to the public sector. It will urge localities to strictly implement policies for public employees to meet the requirements of innovation and improvement of the quality of public service.

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn> 09/27/2022*

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## South Asia

### **INDIA: Bhagwant Mann's Government Fulfills Another Poll Promise, Clears All the Pending Dues of Sugarcane Cultivators**

Keeping its another promise to the sugarcane farmers, the Punjab government led by Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Thursday has in an unprecedented way cleared all the pending dues of the sugarcane farmers by depositing last installment of Rs 75 crore in their respective accounts. Divulging the details, the Chief Minister said that the state Government has released Rs. 75.00 crores as payment to the sugarcane farmers on Wednesday i.e September 7, 2022 through Sugarfed, Punjab. He said that the same has been deposited in the respective accounts of the concerned sugarcane farmers today (Thursday, September 8). Bhagwant Mann said that with this, there is no outstanding dues of Sugarcane growers left against the nine Cooperative Sugar Mills at Ajnala, Batala, Budhewal, Bhogpur, Fazilka, Gurdaspur, Morinda, Nakodar and Nawanshahr. The Chief Minister further said that these pending payments relate to the crushing season 2021-22 and for the first time all the dues of the farmers have been cleared. He asserted that with this payment of Rs.75 crore, the Cooperative Sugar Mills in the state have cleared all the pending arrears of cane farmers. Bhagwant Mann said, that till now Rs.619.62 crores have been paid to the sugarcane farmers and nothing is left as on date. Reiterating firm commitment of the state government to safeguard the interests of farmers, the Chief Minister said that the state government is leaving no stone unturned for it. He said that strenuous

efforts are being made to make agriculture a profitable venture by supplementing the income of farmers through crop diversification. Bhagwant Mann said that his Government is making sincere efforts to ensure that in the forthcoming sugarcane season of 2022-23, no such inordinate delay takes place and farmers get the payment of their produce on time.

From <https://egov.eletsonline.com> 09/09/2022

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## **Punjab Finance Minister Seeks Union Government's Support for Amalgamation of DCCBS with PSCB**

The Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema on Thursday urged the Union Government to convince the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to approve the state proposal of amalgamation of District Co-operative Central Banks (DCCBs) with Punjab State Cooperative Bank (PSCB). He made a list of requests to the Central government viz., reinstating the 2% interest subvention to PSCB, reducing the rate of interest on refinancing of short-term agriculture loans from NABARD, infusing capital in cooperative banks on the pattern of commercial banks, reversing Capital to Risk Assets Ratio (CRAR) norms to 7 per cent, reducing GST on milk and milk products to minimum tax slab, and setting up National institute for New Product Development expertise in the state. Addressing the Conference of State Cooperation Ministers held at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi, Harpal Singh Cheema said that for Punjab with 50362 square km of area, the 20 DCCBs were not feasible and this three-tier structure if converted to two-tier structure by amalgamating DCCBs with Punjab State Cooperative Bank (PSCB), would bring in efficiency and help in better administrative culture. "This will also help in a big way to utilise local capital available with some DCCBS with higher Capital to Risk Assets Ratio (CRAR) in a more equitable manner for the benefit of people in other geographical areas in the State", Cheema added. Urging the Union Government to convince RBI for approving the state proposal of amalgamation on priority, Cheema said that this would also do away with the requirement of maintaining Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR) at both levels and to have separate 21 CBS licenses in a small State, while adding that the State has already submitted the proposal to RBI by fulfilling all statutory requirements.

Punjab Finance Minister also raised the issue of 2 per cent interest subvention to Cooperative Banks which was stopped by Central government with effect from April 1, 2022. Raising demand for reducing the rate of interest on refinance of short-term agriculture loans from NABARD, Cheema said that the rate of interest on refinance of short-term agriculture loans from NABARD was 2.5 per cent till 2006-07, which had gradually been increased to 4.5per cent over the last 15 years. "The upper limit for extending the loan to farmers is placed at 7 per cent. This leaves margin of only 2.5 per cent for three levels; PSCB, DCCBS and PACS. This rate is critical in mitigating losses incurred by three tier-structure while providing low-cost loans to the farmers",

said Cheema. Punjab Finance Minister also stressed upon the need to infuse capital in Cooperative Banks on the pattern of Commercial Banks to strengthen the Cooperative Structure in the state as well as in the country. He said that capital Assistance of Rs 236.00 crore is required for maintaining CRAR in 11 DCCBS in Punjab during the current financial year. Seeking reversal of CRAR norms to 7 per cent, Punjab Finance Minister said that as per the business model of Cooperative Banks, and the risk involved in the loans, Cooperative Banks were finding it difficult to maintain 9 per cent CRAR norms. "As of now, NABARD has stopped financing to four DCCBS in Punjab due to less CRAR and the number is likely to grow to eleven at the end of current financial year in the absence of capital infusion despite the fact that these Banks are working hard to ensure timely recovery", said Cheema while requesting the Gol to intervene with RBI to give special relaxation to cooperatives with respect to stringent CRAR norms and reversing it to 7 per cent from current level of 9 per cent.

Batting for the viability of the Cooperative milk federation, Harpal Sing Cheema said that the GST on milk and milk products may be reduced to the minimum tax slab. He said that the financial benefit accrued out of this exemption may be further passed on to the end consumers as well as milk producers. He said that it would boost the rural economy and income of dairy farmers besides lowering the burden of the urban middle class. Thanking Union government for rolling out the Agricultural Infrastructure Fund scheme, Punjab Finance Minister said that certain activities like food processing and allied activities related to dairy should also be included in this scheme to increase the viability and sustainability of cooperatives, and to meet the peculiar needs of state of Punjab. He said this can be done within the present financial limit of Rs. 2 crore. Lauding the Union Cooperative Ministry's plan to set up a National University for Cooperative education, Cheema said that a National institute for New Product Development expertise should be considered to be set up for Punjab in the cooperative sector for the purpose of technical research and new product development, in line with the National Institute of Food Technology Entrepreneurship and Management (NIFTEM) in Haryana and Central Food Technological Research Institute (CFTRI) in Karnataka.

From <https://egov.eletsonline.com> 09/09/2022

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## **Punjab Local Bodies to Launch Paperless Governance Drive from October 1**

In order to provide people seamless services through e-governance, the Local Government Department in Punjab is all set to launch a drive towards gradual paperless governance from October 1. The Local Government Department and PMIDC organized a "Consultative Workshop on Municipal Accounting Reforms Transparency, Robust Finances, and Future Growth" on Thursday. Addressing various officials present at the conference, Principal Secretary Local Government Mr.



Vivek Pratap Singh said, that Punjab government is keen to implement the 'Double Entry Based Accrual Accounting' (DEBAA), hence the department has initiated municipal financial reforms for transparency in urban local services, strengthening financial management, removing financial deficiencies and future-oriented development. He informed that after implementing online system DEBAA, the department and its wings spread across the state will be easily audited, prior budget proposals can be made effortlessly and officials posted at two places will be able to easily work at both their places. With this, the municipal financial reforms will further strengthen transparency and financial management in urban local services, he said, adding that after implementing DEBAA properly in Punjab; daily account closing will be mandatory, opening balances of all cities will be compiled and new and latest software will be rolled out. He said that this system will increase transparency in Urban Governance, make cities creditworthy, decrease the chances of misuse of municipal properties, and make budget formation and finance management more efficient for administrators. The Officers of e-Gov foundation, NIC and Examiner Local Fund Audit (ELFA) took part in the Conference to understand software requirements. During the conference, the officials of PMIDC and Local Government also listened to the needs and demands of field officers and CAs who deal with Municipal Financing on a daily basis. Apart from this, introduction of Double Entry Based Accrual Accounting (DEBAA) in cities in Punjab, an overview of the Punjab Municipal Accounting Manual, planning for rolling out DEBAA in cities by taking feedback from field staff, software management with regard to mSeva; looking at a new horizon of software with NIC and eGov Foundation were discussed. Mr. Ravikant Joshi, Ex-CAO, Vadodara MC, presently consultant on Municipal Accounting with World Bank and CRISIL delivered the keynote address.

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## **Centre Effects Major Bureaucratic Reshuffle, Names Sunil Barthwal Commerce Secretary**

In a major bureaucratic reshuffle at the top level, the Centre on Thursday appointed senior IAS officers Sunil Barthwal and Vivek Bharadwaj as Commerce and Mines Secretary. Barthwal, a 1989-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of Bihar cadre, is currently Secretary, Ministry of Labour & Employment. He has been appointed as Officer on Special Duty in the Department of Commerce with immediate effect, an order issued by the Personnel Ministry said. According to the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) order, the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved the appointments of 13 IAS officers in different ministries and departments. Rajesh Aggarwal, IAS (MH, 1989), Secretary in the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, has been appointed as Secretary in the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities. Arun Singhal, IAS (UP, 1987), has been appointed Secretary in the Department of Fertilisers. Earlier, he was with the FSSAI. Similarly, B V R Subrahmanyam, IAS (CG, 1987) has been posted

as Chairman and Managing Director, India Trade Promotion Organisation, on a contract basis for two years in the rank and pay of Secretary to the Government of India upon his superannuation on September 30.

Anjali Bhawra, IAS (PB, 1988), currently serving as Secretary in the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, has been appointed as Secretary in the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment. While Mukhmeet Singh Bhatia, IAS (JH, 1990), will take charge as Secretary in the Ministry of Minority Affairs. Currently, Bhatia is Director General of ESIC. Rajesh Kumar Singh, IAS (KL, 1989), has been appointed as Secretary in the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, said the order. Arti Ahuja, IAS (OR, 1990), will take over as Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment, while Vijoy Kumar Singh, IAS (PB, 1990), has been appointed as Secretary in the Department of Ex-Servicemen Welfare, Ministry of Defence. Atul Kumar Tiwari, 1990 batch Karnataka cadre IAS has been appointed as skill development secretary, while Arun Baroka is appointed as Secretary, Department of Chemicals and Petro-Chemicals and Gudey Srinivas is new Parliamentary Affairs Secretary. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet also approved the in-situ upgradation of Rajiv Jalota, IAS (MH, 1988), as Chairperson, Mumbai Port Trust in the rank and pay of Secretary, and Ashish Upadhyaya, IAS (MP, 1989), as Special Secretary and Financial Advisor, Ministry of Power. Upadhyaya is at present Additional Secretary & Financial Adviser in the Ministry of Power.

From <https://egov.eletsonline.com> 09/16/2022

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## **Uttar Pradesh Government Launches Portal for Issuing ‘E-rent Agreements’ in Gautam Buddh Nagar**

In another major move towards ensuring ‘ease of living’ for the common citizens and traders in Uttar Pradesh and at the same time increasing the state’s revenue, the Yogi Adityanath government launched a portal for issuing ‘e-rent agreements’ in Gautam Buddh Nagar and will soon implement the system for issuing lease deeds online in other districts of the state as well. The ‘e-rent agreements’ enable tenants to get into a contract with the owner of the respective house or building, online, in a comparatively more secure and reliable manner. For Gautam Buddha Nagar, [www.gbnagar.nic.in](http://www.gbnagar.nic.in) portal has been developed through which a copy of the lease deed can be availed after completing the procedure of paying the stamp duty. With e-rent agreements, the common citizens will be spared the tedious process of getting rent agreements made manually. In the proposed online process, the tenant will only have to access the agreement portal approved by the Uttar Pradesh government and enter the lease details by entering his respective details like name and mobile number. This system will also become a good source of revenue for the state. Currently, in Gautam Buddha Nagar, at least 1.5 lakh lease deeds per annum are done. Through stamp duty, this process generates revenue of Rs 1.5 crore per year. At the same time, through the proposed lease deed, Rs 3600 will be received

through 2 per cent stamp duty on every monthly rent exceeding Rs 15,000. Overall, the government will receive revenue of Rs 54 crore from Gautam Budh Nagar itself. Once the system is implemented in the entire state, the government is expected to receive more revenue.

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## **With Election in Focus, Haryana Constitutes SVEEP Committee**

Following the direction of Election Commission of India, Haryana has constituted a state-level SVEEP Core Committee under the chairmanship of Chief Electoral Officer, Sh. Anurag Agarwal for playing an integral role in holding consultations during formulation of Systematic Voter Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) plan prior to elections in the State. Additional Chief Electoral Officer and SVEEP Nodal Officer, Smt. Hema Sharma will be the member convener in this committee. In addition, Sh. Pavitar Singh, Regional Outreach Bureau, Kendriya Sadan Chandigarh, Sh. Raj Singh, Deputy Director (Press) of Information, Public Relations and Languages Department, Haryana, Sh. Sanjiv Dosajh, Assistant Director (Programmes), All India Radio Chandigarh, Sh. Pradeep Kumar, Deputy Director, Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, Haryana, Sh. Bhagat Singh, State NSS Officer, Higher Education Department, Haryana, Sh. Yashveer Kadyan , Associate Editor cum Bureau Chief, Aaj Samaj, Sh. Vimal, Producer, Station Director, Doordarshan Kendra Chandigarh and Deepak Sharma (Social Media Executive) have been appointed as Committee members. The Committee has been assigned to ensure a holistic perspective in policy making. Also, it will play an integral role in holding consultations during formulation of SVEEP plan prior to elections in the state. Apart from this, the Committee will also do a comprehensive monitoring and implementation of the SVEEP plan.

From <https://egov.eletsonline.com> 09/17/2022

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## **UP CM Reviews Progress in Har Ghar Nal Yojana Under Jal Jeevan Mission**

Taking stock of the ongoing development in Har Ghar Nal Yojana, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday reviewed the progress status of the project which is being run under the Jal Jeevan Mission. Emphasising the importance of the project, the Chief Minister directed the officials for the timely execution of the project and shared necessary guidelines for ensuring quality work under Jal Jeevan Mission. In the meeting held through video conferencing, the Chief Minister also inquired about the physical progress of the project from the district magistrates and directed them to review it regularly. Some notable points of the review –The developmental picture of the Bundelkhand-Vindhya region is changing fast with the 'Jal Jeevan Mission, which was launched on 15th August 2019, with the aim of providing pure drinking water to

every citizen. The project is fulfilling the long-held dream of having pure drinking water in the region, thereby enhancing Ease of Living. "Water is life" encapsulates the kind of importance the government or citizens must attach to it in order to conserve it. With the resolve of 'Har Ghar Nal', we have installed tap connections in 46.72 lakh houses so far. Accelerate installation work to achieve the target of supplying pure drinking water to one crore households by the end of this financial year. The areas which have not been connected so far with the scheme of supply of pure drinking water, should be connected as soon as possible. For this, the District Magistrate should ensure the availability of land. Adequate funds are available for time-bound implementation and quality work of Har Ghar Nal Project. There should be no shortage of manpower in any district, at any level. Not a single incident of negligence in work, laxity, or misuse, of any public servants will be accepted under any circumstances. If any agency is doing wrong, inform the government immediately, and strict action will be taken.

Consider utilising Chambal river water instead of Lower Ganga canal water for supplying drinking water in Aligarh and Agra divisions. There is enough water in Chambal, the water is sweet too. Its feasibility should be tested by sending a team of technical experts. We have to provide pure drinking water to 97 thousand villages. In such a situation, an action plan covering all 97000 villages should be prepared. It should be ensured that the water connection from the piped tap reaches the courtyard of the house. Our target is to have clean drinking water in every household of every revenue village by March 2024. The process of installation of piped drinking water connections in every household needs to be expedited. Right now 13000 to 14000 connections are being installed every day, action should be taken to increase it to 25, 000. Trained plumbers should be deployed in every village. Don't delay it unnecessarily. There should be no unreasonable delay in issuing NOC at the district or state level. All the district magistrates should take the responsibility to complete the initial processes including the preparation of DPR expeditiously. Keep physical inspection of the work done. Improvement is expected in districts like Sultanpur, Barabanki, Sambhal, Ayodhya, etc. Monthly targets have been given to all the districts for FHTC. Districts like Sitapur, Prayagraj, Aligarh, Shahjahanpur, etc. will have to expedite the work. The district magistrates should ensure that this target is completed on time. Increase manpower if needed. Communicate directly with technical staff. Time-bound and quality implementation of Jalshakti, Swachh Bharat Mission, and Namami Gange projects should be ensured in collaboration with central government institutions. Unnecessary delay in electricity connection for piped drinking water in Vindhya-Bundelkhand should not be done. Namami Gange Department and Energy Department should complete this work in time with mutual coordination. The system of on-site inspection will have to be strengthened further. There should be complete purity and transparency in the procedure. Villages 100% saturated with Jal Jeevan Mission should be verified with transparency. Village water committees should be activated. These committees will assess the quality of work.

Consumption of impure drinking water has been the main factor in diseases like encephalitis. Special efforts are being made under Jal Jeevan Mission for the improvement of water quality in affected areas due to arsenic, fluoride, salinity, nitrate, iron etc. In this regard, the Government of India is providing additional financial assistance. Work in these areas needs to be accelerated. Taking forward the Atal Bhujal Yojana of the Government of India, the state government has also connected all the districts of the state with the groundwater scheme. Good results of this scheme have been seen in Bundelkhand. Public participation is very important for groundwater conservation. Efforts should be made to involve as many people as possible in this campaign.

From <https://egov.eletsonline.com> 09/26/2022

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## **UP: From Connectivity to Development, a Look at 6 Months of Yogi Govt 2.0**

The Yogi Adityanath-led Uttar Pradesh government completed six months of its second term on Sunday, September 25. The government had much to celebrate in terms of development works carried out during the period. The increasing connectivity across Uttar Pradesh with the opening of new expressways and construction and expansion of new and existing roads have boosted the development of the state on multiple fronts. The Yogi government has started tapping the immense potential of the state in these six months, the foundation of which was laid during its first term. Under the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, radical changes have been made in the field of infrastructure development of the state.

### **Expressways accelerate pace of development**

The network of expressways spread over 1,225 km in UP has not only made travel easier and faster, but is also leading to development of industrial hubs on both sides of the expressways, giving impetus to the development of the state. Whether it is about connecting economically-backward Purvanchal and Bundelkhand with expressways, or building Agra-Lucknow Expressway, Delhi-Meerut Expressway, Noida-Greater Noida Expressway and Yamuna Expressway, every expressway is opening the path of new possibilities of development for the state. Not only industrial areas, residential buildings and commercial centres, but also big infrastructure projects such as Film City, Jewar Airport, Medical Device Park, Logistics Park, Fintech City, IT City and Data Centre Park are also coming up on both sides of these expressways. Work is also underway on 6 new expressways in UP, including Gorakhpur Link Expressway (91 km), Ganga Expressway (594 km), Lucknow-Kanpur Expressway (63 km), Ghaziabad-Kanpur Expressway (380 km), Gorakhpur-Siliguri Expressway (519 km), Delhi-Saharanpur-Dehradun Expressway (210 km) and Ghazipur Ballia Manjhighat Expressway (117 km). While these expressways will facilitate the movement of both people and goods, the industrial

clusters being built along with it are set to boost the development journey of the state.

#### Increasing air connectivity

The Yogi government is also working tirelessly to enhance air connectivity in the state through building of new domestic and international airports. The government is working on the ambitious plan of having 18 airports in the state including five international airports. Kushinagar International Airport, which has already been opened and Jewar International Airport, which is under construction, have attracted global attention. The government has also selected five airports in Aligarh, Azamgarh, Chitrakoot, Myorpur (Sonbhadra) and Shravasti under the Regional Connectivity scheme in order to develop them in line with the specifications for Airbus A-321. Air connectivity will facilitate passenger and cargo movement, benefitting local farmers and industries.

#### Health infrastructure gets a boost

The slogan 'Healthy State, Happy State', given by CM Yogi reflects the importance that the CM attaches to the health system of the state. The last six months have seen many innovative steps by the government to improve health infrastructure and facilities in the state. The government recently inaugurated a health ATM in Gorakhpur and is installing health ATMs at 4600 primary health centres of the state. Besides, the government is running medical colleges in 65 districts, and AIIMS in Gorakhpur and Raebareli. Also, 22 medical colleges are currently under construction in the state. In COVID management, Uttar Pradesh has excelled among states, giving more than 38 crore vaccine doses. Apart from this, 6.51 crore people of the state have received Ayushman card to avail health insurance cover of upto Rs 5 lakh.

#### Film City to open doors of possibilities

Dubbed to be the country's biggest and most beautiful film city, the proposed Film City in Noida is a ray of hope for the talented artists of not only Uttar Pradesh but the whole of North India. It is being built at a cost of Rs 10,000 crore in about 1000 acres, which will not only increase employment opportunities, but also give new energy to the tourism of UP. The use of advanced technologies like animation, OTT and gaming at the proposed Film Institute inside the city will connect the youth of UP with world class job opportunities. A data centre is also to be constructed in the Film City for pre-production and post production of films.

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## **UP State Planning Commission Getting Restructured, to Be Renamed as State Transformation Commission**

Replicating the restructuring and renaming of the Planning Commission as Niti Aayog, the Uttar Pradesh Cabinet on Tuesday cleared the proposal for restructuring of the Uttar Pradesh State Planning Commission which will now be renamed as the

State Transformation Commission. The government body will act as a think tank for the 'development and economic progress of the state with Chief Minister as its chairperson and ministers, officials, and intellectuals from different fields as members. It will also have a vice-chairperson and chief executive officer (CEO). The term of members will be for three years, which can be extended for another two years under special circumstances. Commenting on the development, Minister AK Sharma said, 'The Cabinet has approved the restructuring of the Uttar Pradesh State Planning Commission which was formed in August 1972. While the CM will be its chairperson, the Deputy CMs along with ministers of agriculture, finance, social welfare, panchayati raj, industrial development, Jal Shakti, urban development and the minister of state for planning will be members.' Referring to the commission as the state government's 'think tank', Sharma said, 'It will act as a think tank for policy formation and to give a push to the state's economy.'

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## **Major Bureaucratic Rejig in Maharashtra, 44 IAS Officers Transferred**

In a major bureaucratic reshuffle, the Eknath Shinde-led Maharashtra government on Thursday transferred 44 IAS officers. Public health additional chief secretary (ACS) Dr Pradeep Kumar Vyas has been appointed as ACS tribal welfare development. He has been replaced by Sanjay Khandare, managing director of MahaGenco. Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) CEO P Anbalagan has been transferred as the MahaGenco CMD. Thane municipal commissioner Vipin Sharma has been posted as MIDC CEO. IAS Tukaram Mundhe, secretary, State Human Rights Commission has been posted as commissioner (FW) and director, NHM, Mumbai. Dr Ashwini Joshi, development commissioner (unorganised labour), has been posted as secretary, medical education and drug department and medical education secretary Saurabh Vijay has been made secretary, cultural and tourism department. The state government has transferred environment department principal secretary Manisha Mhaiskar as the principal secretary and chief protocol officer in the general administration. She will also hold the additional charge as principal secretary of the Marathi language department. Housing department principal secretary Milind Mhaiskar will be the new principal secretary of excise and civil aviation while Valsa Nair, who headed the civil aviation department, will be the principal secretary (Housing).

Praveen Darade has been appointed the principal secretary of the environment department and will hold the additional charge as member secretary of the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB). Vivek Bhimanwar, who worked earlier in the Devendra Fadnavis secretariat, will now be the transport commissioner. Deepak Kapoor has been appointed as additional chief secretary (Irrigation). Harshadeep Kamble is now the principal secretary of the industry department and

Deependra Kushwaha is the development commissioner. The government has transferred the Navi Mumbai municipal commissioner Abhijit Bangar as the Thane municipal commissioner. Thane collector Rajesh Narvekar will be joining NMMC as commissioner. State Pollution Control Board secretary Ashok Shingare is the new Thane collector. Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) managing director Jayshree Bhoj was transferred as director general (information and public relations). The government appointed IRS officer Shraddha Joshi as MTDC chief. Anup Yadav, in charge of the tribal welfare department is now the head of minority welfare, while Aurangabad CEO Nilesh Gatne is the new Pune Slum Redevelopment Authority chief.

From <https://egov.eletsonline.com> 09/30/2022

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## **PAKISTAN: 20,000 People Likely to Participate in PTI's Long March, Interior Minister Told**

The federal government on Tuesday decided to deploy Pakistan Army in the capital city's Red Zone to stop the entry of protestors in the high security area, in case former prime minister Imran Khan leads a PTI long march on the capital to seek early elections. The government also decided that protestors would not be allowed to enter the capital city at any cost. These decisions were taken at a meeting chaired by Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah Khan at the Ministry of Interior. The primary purpose of the meeting was to review the law and order situation and to finalise a strategy to stop the marchers entering into Islamabad, according to the official sources in the interior ministry. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan has announced to hold a long march on Islamabad to press the government to hold early elections, but he has yet to give a final date of the protest. It is likely that the march will finally convert into a sit-in once the protestors reach their final destination—the capital of Pakistan. In a recent interview, Khan has said that only few people close to him knew about the details of their plan. The meeting at the interior ministry decided that the security of all important buildings and the diplomatic enclave, located in the Red Zone would be handed over to the Pakistan Army during the protest march. For this purpose, the army troops would be called out under Article 245 of the Constitution to assist the civil administration in maintaining law and order in the federal capital. It was also decided in the meeting that Sindh Police, and paramilitary troops including Rangers and Frontier Constabulary (FC) would be requisitioned to assist the Islamabad Police during the protest.

From <https://www.nation.com.pk> 09/30/2022

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## **Central-West Asia**

### **AZERBAIJAN: Approving List of Unified Indices Defined for State Bodies**



Azerbaijani Prime Minister Ali Asadov signed a decree on approving a list of unified indices defined for state bodies, legal entities owned by the state and a controlling stake in which belongs to the state, and public legal entities established on behalf of the state, Trend reports. This decree was adopted in order to improve the centralized application of electronization through the e-government information system of internal management processes in state bodies (structures) and ensuring the effective functioning of the interdepartmental electronic document management system. In accordance with the decree, a newly created or reorganized state body (institution) will be assigned a new index. When a state body (institution) is abolished, its index will remain unused. Indexes established by the list won't apply on documents that are in the internal production of state bodies (institutions), such as court, law enforcement agencies, customs and other bodies. The index of institutions which are subordinate (structure) of state bodies (institutions) will be determined by the relevant state body (institution) itself and indicated after its main index. The decree will come into force on January 1, 2023.

From <https://en.trend.az> 09/16/2022

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## **Azerbaijan to Create Unified State Automated Information System**

'Track and Trace' unified state automated information system will be created in Azerbaijan, Trend reports. This issue was reflected in the proposed amendment to the Tax Code at today's meeting of the Milli Majlis (Parliament) Committee on Economic Policy, Industry and Entrepreneurship and recommended for consideration at the plenary session of the Parliament. The draft law will be prepared in order to regulate the circulation of excise goods and goods with mandatory labeling and ensure tax control over the import, production, sale and circulation of these goods. With the adoption of the draft law, it's planned to create a 'Track and Trace' unified state automated information system, which allows controlling the circulation of excise goods and goods with mandatory labeling, along the entire chain from production and import to the end consumer. This will play an important role in eliminating the shadow economy, preventing counterfeiting of excise goods and excise stamps, and ultimately protecting consumer rights.

From <https://en.trend.az> 09/23/2022

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## **Azerbaijani Minister Shares Plans for Countrywide Digital Transformation**

Favorable conditions for public-private partnerships have been created in Azerbaijan to develop the appropriate infrastructure for digital transformation in remote areas of the country, Minister of Digital Development and Transport Rashad Nabiyev said during a ministerial round table in Bucharest, Trend reports "Thanks to ongoing

projects, it's planned to provide the entire territory of the country with high-speed broadband internet by 2024," Nabiyev noted. "Special attention is also paid to the development of mobile communications and mobile internet. Access to mobile internet is very important for digital transformation," he added.

From <https://en.trend.az> 09/26/2022

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## **Azerbaijani State Customs Committee's New Online Service to Simplify Vehicle Imports**

The new electronic service of the State Customs Committee of Azerbaijan will simplify the process of importing vehicles into the country, the committee told Trend. According to the committee, the new service will allow obtaining information on compliance with the Euro-4 environmental standard before importing a vehicle into the country. "Citizens just need to contact the customs authority online through the E-Customs portal or the Smart Customs mobile application and provide the relevant information. The correctness of the application and other documents sent to the customs authority is checked online, and the certificate of compliance of the vehicle with Euro-4 environmental standards is sent to the 'personal cabinet' of the citizen within the period established by law," the committee said. This innovation will facilitate the process of crossing the border, as well as increase transparency in this area and eliminate queues, added the committee.

From <https://en.trend.az> 09/30/2022

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## **KAZAKHSTAN: Announcing Upcoming Presidential Elections**

Early presidential elections in Kazakhstan will be held on November 20, President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev said this in his address to the people, Trend reports. He noted that a relevant decree was signed in connection with this. "Today I signed a decree on early Kazakh presidential elections for November 20, 2022 in accordance with the previously announced electoral schedule and Constitution of Kazakhstan. These elections kick off the electoral cycle, following which a radical reset of the entire political system will be carried out. This will allow Kazakhstan in the future, focus on solving long-term tasks to ensure sustainable economic growth, improve the welfare and quality of citizen's lives," Tokayev stated. According to the latest amendments to the Constitution of Kazakhstan, the presidential term was increased to seven years. President himself is also expected to participate in the upcoming elections.

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**Oceania**

## **NEW ZEALAND: Pathways to Make Home Now Open**

The Government is delivering on its promise of a responsive and streamlined immigration system to help relieve workforce shortages while providing meaningful humanitarian support, Immigration Minister Michael Wood has announced. From today, eligible skilled migrants with a job or a job offer in specific roles on the Straight to Residence pathway will be able to apply for residence, both from on shore and overseas. “The Straight to Residence pathway provides an incentive for migrants who have skills in hard-to-fill, nationally significant roles that New Zealand needs to speed up our economic growth,” Michael Wood said. “This new pathway offers potential migrants, like health practitioners, engineers, construction and infrastructure workers, and IT professionals more certainty. The streamlined process makes it easier for employers to attract and hire people that will help address shortages in these highly skilled areas.

“This is one of three new residence pathways introduced as part of the Government’s immigration rebalance. Skilled migrants on the ‘Work to Residence’ and ‘Highly Paid’ resident pathways will be able to apply from 29 September 2023, once they have obtained 24 months of acceptable work in New Zealand,” Michael Wood said. The Government has also confirmed details of the next three years of the Refugee Quota Programme, including the composition of the 2022/23 quota. “The Refugee Quota Programme is a reflection of New Zealand’s international humanitarian commitments to provide protection to people who are not able to return safely to their home country,” Michael Wood said. “The programme is back at its full capacity and will resettle 1,500 refugees each year.

“This year, the proportion of places allocated to three of the four regions is changing to ensure we are best responding to the resettlement needs of each region. For example, we have increased the proportion of places allocated to refugees in both the Middle East and Africa from 15 to 20 percent respectively. “As part of the 1,500 intake, 200 places will be allocated to resettle Syrian refugees, including Kurdish minorities, located in Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, given the huge scale and prolonged nature of the Syrian refugee crisis and the coordinated international resettlement efforts. “We are also pleased to be able to increase the number of emergency and urgent resettlement places for the quota from 35 to 100, as well as bringing forward the 200 places specifically set aside for Afghan refugees as a result of the Taliban takeover in 2021 to 200 places for the 2022/23 period. “In addition to these places, Afghan refugees can be considered for resettlement to New Zealand as part of the Quota’s international allocations. “These changes ensure that the programme remains responsive to the protection needs of refugees coming into New Zealand,” Michael Wood said.

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 09/05/2022

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## 3、 Management, Capacity Building and Innovation

### Asia-Pacific

#### **World Bank Support to Increase Community Access to Climate Resilient Infrastructure and Strengthen Local Capacity**

The World Bank approved today a credit from the International Development Associated (IDA) in the amount of \$300 million, to support Cameroon's efforts to build local capacity and community resilience. The Local Governance and Resilient Communities project will directly benefit an estimated 180 municipalities with more than 1,5 million citizens and help strengthen capacity of local authorities to manage resources and deliver better services to their citizens as well as increase community access to climate-resilient infrastructures. The project intends to support Cameroon's development goals by enhancing communities' participation in local planning and governance; delivering key climate-resilient community infrastructures; and building the capacity of decentralized local authorities to manage and implement public investments.

"We know that fragility and poverty are exacerbated by increased challenges posed by natural hazards and climate change. The most vulnerable communities from all regions have been severely impacted and seen their habitat, livelihoods or cultures damaged, destroyed, or lost," said Abdoulaye Seck, World Bank Country Director for Cameroon. "In this context, it is important to support communities and local government, such as municipalities and regional councils, to develop and access climate-resilient infrastructures and further promote citizen engagement to improve resource management and inclusive service delivery." The Local Governance and Resilient Communities project seeks specifically to improve: (i) community infrastructures and basic services; and (ii) the multi-level governance framework and the capacity of decentralized entities to deliver services. The project aims to build long-term economic, climate, and community resilience.

From <https://www.worldbank.org/> 09/28/2022

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#### **Expansion of Social Protection Programs Necessary for a Resilient Recovery**

Universal Social Protection is critical to effectively protect people against poverty, prevent risks to their livelihoods and well-being, and help them access economic opportunities. Achieving this goal will require social protection systems that are stronger, more resilient and better funded, according to a new World Bank report. While the pandemic, food and fuel price inflation, and longer-term challenges such as climate change make social protection critically important, they also threaten

countries' ability to raise spending and expand the social protection programs necessary for more resilient systems. The new report, "Charting a Course Towards Universal Social Protection – Resilience, Equity, and Opportunity for All," sets out a vision for achieving universal social protection. It underscores the need for countries to build integrated social protection systems that are underpinned by an increase in national spending to help expand social protection coverage, including to informal workers. To generate additional fiscal space, governments will need to reduce inefficient spending and mobilize more domestic revenues alongside continued international support.

"Social protection aims to promote investments in people and access to productive work, resilience to shocks and equality of opportunity," said Mamta Murthi, World Bank Vice President for Human Development. "To reach universal social protection, governments will need to integrate services, such as social insurance, social assistance, and economic inclusion programs, ensuring all people are effectively protected throughout their lifecycle and across income levels." The report identifies five priorities for the World Bank to help developing countries further accelerate progress towards universal social protection. Climate change considerations and empowerment of women and girls are at the heart of these efforts. The five areas include:

Building strong foundational social protection systems.

Increasing coverage for social protection programs and promoting greater inclusion.

Building more resilient, adaptive, and dynamic programming.

Scaling up effective economic inclusion and labor systems.

Creating more fiscal space for universal social protection.

"In response to the multiple crises facing low- and middle- income countries, the World Bank is providing unprecedented support to help governments expand and improve social protection systems," said Michal Rutkowski, Global Director for Social Protection and Jobs at the World Bank. "This new report provides a vision towards the inclusive adoption of universal social protection to ensure that all people, including the poorest and most vulnerable populations, have the support they need and that no individuals or groups are left behind."

Strengthening social protection systems is central to the World Bank's mission to reduce poverty and promote shared prosperity. The COVID-19 pandemic proved to be a major catalyst for global efforts to scale up social protection systems. Between April 2020 and June 2022, the World Bank doubled its pre-COVID-19 social protection portfolio and provided more than \$14 billion to 60 countries, including 16 countries affected by fragility and conflict, reaching more than one billion people worldwide. As of September 2022, the World Bank is providing \$30 billion in financing to countries across regions and income levels. This includes \$17 billion through IDA, the Bank's fund for the world's poorest countries. To download the report, [Charting a Course Towards Universal Social Protection – Resilience, Equity,](#)

and Opportunity for All, please visit here.

From <https://www.worldbank.org/> 09/29/2022

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## **World Bank, Milken Institute, and Bayes Business School Launch Public Financial Asset Management Program**

The World Bank, Milken Institute and Bayes Business School (formerly Cass) launched the Public Financial Asset Management Program (PFAM). It is a first-of-its-kind program for mid-career public asset managers across developing and emerging markets to bridge the gap between theory and practice. The nine-month program includes coursework by leading professors at Bayes supplemented by a practitioner Speaker Series, followed by on-the-job training at distinguished asset management firms across the World Bank-Milken Institute network. Scholars receive a Post-graduate Diploma and can convert it to a full MSc in Finance by completing additional studies.

The inaugural cohort begins this month and will graduate in May 2023. The 17 scholars, including eight women and nine men, hail from 11 countries, including North Africa and the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, Eurasia, East Asia and Southeast Asia. Most of the 17 scholars represent central banks, and the remaining four are from sovereign wealth funds and public pension funds, bringing a diverse expertise from areas of risk management, asset allocation, portfolio management and investments. Central banks, sovereign wealth funds, public pension funds collectively manage more than \$40 trillion in reserves and assets worldwide. A challenging global macroeconomic environment, rapidly evolving financial markets, technology, and the increasing complexity of investment strategies make it crucial for developing and emerging economies to continuously strengthen governance and enhance the process of the management of public financial assets.

“I am delighted by the launch of this unique program that helps strengthen the long-term financial position and resilience of public institutions of our members countries, working to advance the World Bank’s mission. We build on the success of the World Bank’s Reserve Advisory & Management Partnership to expand and deepen our offering to future leaders of public asset management institutions. For over 20 years, RAMP has delivered first-class advisory and training services to public asset managers, and PFAM extends the Partnership’s advisory services. I have confidence that our highly experienced cohort will build a global network to foster best practices and pursue excellence in their institutions to tackle the complexities of public financial asset management.” said Jorge Familiar, Vice President & Treasurer, World Bank.

“Public sector asset managers are the stewards of national wealth for future generations, and play a crucial role in financing long-term prosperity. We are focused

on developing a generation of leaders across developing and emerging economies who have a deep understanding of capital markets, a commitment to good governance, and the strategic tools to make investment decisions that benefit their nations.” said Michael Milken, Chairman, Milken Institute.

“We at Bayes are incredibly excited to be delivering this programme. Helping to develop the portfolio and risk management skills of these scholars from central banks and sovereign wealth funds chimes well with our mission to deliver education that is right at the edge of practice. The scholars’ opportunities to learn from us, from each other and from industry partners will surely be of great value to them and their respective institutions throughout their careers,” said Professor Richard Payne, Deputy Dean, Bayes Business School. The PFAM program in London builds on the success of the IFC-Milken Institute Capital Markets Program in Washington, DC, which has trained over 180 rising financial policymakers and regulators across 45 countries since 2016. Upon graduation, participants return to their home countries on accelerated career path, equipped with the tools and networks to contribute to long-term market development and sustainable economic growth.

From <https://www.worldbank.org/> 09/29/2022

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## **Minister Chuti Krairiksh’s Statement on the 2022 APEC Women and the Economy Forum**

Thailand’s Minister of Social Development and Human Security Chuti Krairiksh shared with APEC Ministers and high-level representatives from the 21 member economies a statement that reflects the outcomes of the 2022 APEC Women and the Economy Forum, which he chaired on Wednesday. The statement reflects concerns over the widening gap and rising inequality for women and underlines the urgent need to step up efforts to empower them, promote their meaningful participation in the economy and improve their livelihoods. It also reiterates commitments to advance gender equality, women’s empowerment and a sustainable and inclusive recovery and call for all APEC members to continue to work towards this goal.

The statement details the strong support of members to advance meaningful actions with consensus in the following areas:

Accelerating the implementation of the La Serena Roadmap for Women and Inclusive Growth (2019-2030)

Recognizing that women and girls can develop meaningful, effective and relevant solutions to advance the bio-circular-green economy model

Bridging the gender digital divide by ensuring equitable access to the internet and in digital skills training

Removing barriers that prevent women and girls of diverse backgrounds from being fully empowered and from benefitting from recovery opportunities

Adopting policies to recognize, reduce and equitably redistribute the unpaid care and

domestic work carried out by women and girls

Collecting, analyzing and disseminating sex-disaggregated data, including science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) training and careers data, to inform decisions, investments and actions

From <https://www.apec.org/> 09/08/2022

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## **Research Addressing Postnatal Depression Wins APEC Healthy Women Prize**

An innovative study that developed a comprehensive, accessible and affordable maternal depression screening strategy has won the 2022 APEC Healthy Women, Healthy Economies Research Prize. Dr Zheng Ruimin, Director of Women's Health Care Department at China's National Center for Women and Children's Health wins this year's award with her work on postnatal depression. The announcement was made during the APEC Women and the Economy Forum on Wednesday in Bangkok. Dr Zheng's study aims to tackle maternal depression at the earliest stage of pregnancy and recommends routine depression screenings across the entire birth process to reduce the burden of disease and economic loss on women.

"After identifying the absence of health strategies that address the high incidence of maternal depression worldwide, I worked to develop a cost-effective screening strategy that economies could incorporate into their maternal health practices," said Dr Zheng. "My research demonstrates that when providers adopt evidence-based interventions, the incidence of maternal depression significantly decreases, improving women's socioeconomic status and health outcomes during childbirth," she added. According to the APEC Women and the Economy Dashboard, the pandemic has further exacerbated socioeconomic disparity, with women sustaining severe losses from the economic fallout and digital disruptions brought about by the pandemic.

"There are many important lessons the pandemic has taught us, but most apparent is that the health and well-being of our people, especially the most vulnerable, are key to a healthy economy," said Renee Graham, Chair of the APEC Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy. "In order to chart a path forward towards an inclusive, sustainable and resilient economy, we must ensure that women and girls have access to quality health education and services—only by incorporating evidence-based solutions can we fully empower women to join, rise and thrive in the workforce," she added. Dr Bach Tran of Viet Nam and Dr Jaime Galvez Tan of the Philippines were the runners up for this year's Healthy Women, Healthy Economies Research Prize. The winning entry receives USD 20,000 and the two runners-up receive USD 5,000 each.

Dr Tran studies the direct and indirect impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on



pregnant women's quality of life, emphasizing the urgent need for policymakers to incorporate evidence-based interventions such as expanded telehealth services and counselling, enhanced familial and social support, and community-based health education strategies to improve maternal health outcomes and care satisfaction. Dr Galvez Tan studies the causes and effects of adolescent pregnancy and recommends evidence-based solutions for early childhood intervention, including school-based comprehensive sexuality education to improve women's health, well-being and empowerment. "Across the APEC region, women's ability to unlock their full economic potential is predicated on access to inclusive health services, which requires a whole-of-society approach" said Hong Chow, Executive Vice President and Head of China and International at Merck Healthcare.

"Through APEC Healthy Women, Healthy Economies, we are advancing stakeholder collaboration to highlight and address the most critical needs of women and girls to fully realize their potential and contribute to the economy," she concluded. The Healthy Women Healthy Economy award was launched in 2019 in partnership with Merck, a global science and technology company, to spotlight and spur the gathering of much-needed data and evidence around women's health so women can join, rise, and thrive in the workforce. The research winners and runners-up underscore the importance of quality health interventions as the foundation of inclusive recovery strategies. For more information on the work of the finalists and on applying for the 2023 prize, please visit the APEC Healthy Women Healthy Economies website.

*From <https://www.apec.org/> 09/09/2022*

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## **Technology Adoption and Integration Is the Lever to Move Up the Value Chain**

A new policy brief by the APEC Policy Support Unit calls for more vigorous development, adoption and investment in fourth-industrial-revolution technologies in the APEC region to support member economies' efforts in moving up the value chain, which will make them more resilient and increase economic gains. The fourth industrial revolution refers to the integration of digital technologies in different sectors with inventions from a wide range of fields such as information technology hardware and software, connectivity, data management, user interfaces, power supply, as well as consumer goods, smart homes, vehicles and healthcare applications.

"Participating in global value chains is a common avenue for economies to join the global production and the innovation ecosystem, however we also know that the revenue generated from each stage of the value chain is not equally distributed," said Dr Akhmad Bayhaqi, a senior analyst with the Policy Support Unit. Dr Bayhaqi explained the concept of the "smiling curve" in value chains, where the two ends of the smile—one end closer to the producer and the other closer to the consumer—have higher gain in terms of value-added compared to the middle point. "This middle

point is the labor-intensive manufacturing stage, which generally adds less relative value,” he explained.

“In order to increase revenue and gains from participating in global value chains, member economies could move their position either upstream towards research and development activities, or downstream towards branding and marketing activities,” Dr Bayhaqi added. This is where the development and adoption of fourth-industrial-revolution technologies play a role, according to the policy brief. The level of technological advancement of an economy could influence its position in global value chains. Investing in research and development, as well as labor upskilling, for example, can help member economies leapfrog to higher stages, while a more traditional approach, such as specialization, could help member economies incrementally build their technology and production capabilities as they move up value chains.

In 2019, the APEC region contributed around 80 percent, or USD 699 billion, of global exports of fourth-industrial-revolution products and 63 percent, or USD 533 billion, of their global imports. China was the leading global exporter, followed by Chinese Taipei, Japan, Korea and Mexico. On the import side, United States and China were the two main contributors, importing 24 percent and 21 percent, respectively.

The policy brief also measures how innovative APEC economies are in the fourth industrial revolution field by assessing the number of patent application collections covering similar technical content. In the last 20 years, the APEC region has recorded a six-fold increase in patent families, from just over 9,000 in 2000, to nearly 57,000 in 2019. These were mainly for connectivity, home, consumer goods as well as information technology hardware and software. Economies that are most active in patenting, such as Canada; China; Japan; Korea; Chinese Taipei; and the US, also show high patent content embedded in their value chains.

“Global value chains, as a form of trade network between multinational corporations and their globally dispersed suppliers, can be channels for the transfer of knowledge, know-how and innovation,” Dr Bayhaqi explained.

“Advanced digital production technologies can bring about integration and upgrading benefits as well as opportunities, such as improving production efficiency using big data analytics,” he concluded. The advantage of adopting and investing in fourth-industrial-revolution technologies go beyond adding revenue and gains, says the policy brief. It is a forward-looking strategy that allows member economies to continue their innovative growth path, as mandated in the APEC Putrajaya Vision. Meanwhile, the successful adoption of these technologies is dependent on enabling factors such as: closing the digital skills gap through digital literacy training; upskilling for local workforces; and knowledge transfers through foreign direct investment in

prioritized sectors.

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## East Asia

### **CHINA: New Measures to Boost Economy Attract Int'l Attention**

The Chinese government's recent proposal of follow-up policies to boost the economy has attracted worldwide attention, with foreign media, experts and businesses expecting continuous growth in China. The State Council of China on Aug. 24 announced 19 follow-up policies to shape greater synergy among the policies already in place. It issued a package of 33 measures in May, covering fiscal, financial, industrial and other fields. Amid the infrastructure drive, the State Council pledged an addition of over 300 billion yuan (43.77 billion U.S. dollars) in quotas for the policy-based and developmental financial instruments, based on 300 billion yuan of such quotas already in place. Commenting on the new measures under a combined impact of historic heat and drought in China, Wall Street Journal said that the policies show "how closely the central government is monitoring the matter" in an article titled "China Rolls Out Aid to Help Power Firms and Save Rice Harvest."

Referring to China's future growth, Anjani Trivedi, a Bloomberg Opinion columnist, said in her report that "industrial China is alive and well despite concerns of an economic slowdown." Though some analysts lowered their projection for China's growth this year, "Beijing's priority areas are doing just fine," Trivedi wrote in the op-ed titled "Don't Believe the Grim Forecast. China Is Just Fine," adding that foreign direct investment into China's high-tech manufacturing increased 3.1 percent in the first half of this year. In an interview with the Forbes Magazine, Nobel laureate A. Michael Spence said, "China is still doing a lot of things right -- they continue to invest heavily in things that have the potential to produce a modern economy." Despite that there are pretty headwinds in the short term for the Chinese economy, the medium- to long-term prospects in China are pretty good, Spence added.

Spence's view was echoed by other scholars. Tan Kong Yam, an economics professor at Singapore's Nanyang Technological University, told Xinhua that the perspective of China's economy is quite optimistic in the long run despite a slowdown in the short term. As a major growth locomotive for the East Asian countries, China's economic growth is very important to these countries and its economic rebound will contribute to the region's recovery, Tan said. A number of executives from international financial institutions have also expressed confidence in China's economy despite global inflationary pressure and a sluggish economic recovery. "As a foreigner working in China, I think China's economic development is full of resilience, strong momentum and optimistic prospects," said Ono Tomoyuki, vice president of Ueda Yagi Money Broking (China) Co., Ltd.

## **Xi Stresses Improving System for Achieving Breakthroughs in Core Technologies in Key Fields**

President Xi Jinping on Tuesday stressed improving a new system for mobilizing the resources nationwide to achieve breakthroughs in core technologies in key fields and comprehensively strengthening efforts to conserve resources. Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks while presiding over the 27th meeting of the Central Commission for Comprehensively Deepening Reform. At the meeting, the commission reviewed and adopted the guideline on improving a new system for mobilizing the resources nationwide to achieve breakthroughs in core technologies in key fields under the socialist market economy, the guideline on deepening reforms of the academician system, the guideline on strengthening resource conservation, the guideline on deepening the pilot of the marketization of rural collective land designated for business-related construction, and the guideline on deepening reform to promote the healthy development of the rural medical and health care system. Xi, also head of the commission, said the country should leverage the marked advantages of socialism which has the ability to mobilize resources to accomplish major initiatives, strengthen the leadership of the CPC and the government on major scientific and technological innovation, and give full play to the role of the market.

China should optimize the allocation of innovation resources based on the country's strategic needs, strengthen the country's strategic scientific and technological strength, greatly improve the systematic ability to tackle key scientific and technological problems, and cultivate competitive advantages and seize the strategic initiative in a number of important areas, Xi said. He also stressed efforts to deepen reforms to give better play to the role of academicians. The country should improve the efficient use of resources, including energy, water, grain, land, minerals and raw materials, and expedite the fundamental transformation of resource utilization approaches, Xi said. Regarding rural affairs, Xi stressed efforts to promote the pilot program for the marketization of rural collective land designated for business-related construction, and foster a rural medical and health care system that is highly efficient and adapted to rural characteristics. Li Keqiang, Wang Huning and Han Zheng, members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and deputy heads of the commission, attended the meeting.

The meeting called for advancing researches on key technologies with first-mover advantages, and on basic cutting-edge technologies that will lead future development. Efforts should be made to strengthen enterprises' dominant position in technological innovation and accelerate the transformation of the function of

government in science and technology management. The meeting underscored promoting simple, green and low-carbon lifestyles, and opposed extravagance and excessive consumption. It urged stepping up the establishment of a resource pricing mechanism that reflects the degree of resource scarcity, the cost of ecological damage and the cost of environmental pollution. The scientific allocation and efficient utilization of resources should be promoted. The reform of the marketization of rural collective land designated for business-related construction must be carried out prudently and steadily, the meeting said.

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## **Xi Calls for Efforts to Boost Enterprise Innovation**

Chinese President Xi Jinping has called for efforts to promote enterprise innovation and foster more small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that are specialized and innovative. Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks in a congratulatory letter to a conference regarding these enterprises' development, which opened Thursday in Nanjing, east China's Jiangsu Province. Calling SMEs a vital force for promoting innovation, creating jobs and improving people's livelihoods, Xi expressed his hope that the specialized and innovative firms can focus on their main business and put effort into cultivating their speciality, so as to make greater contributions to stabilizing industrial and supply chains as well as boosting social and economic development. Governments at all levels should create a favorable environment and increase support for SMEs, consolidate enterprises' confidence in development, encourage enterprises to be innovative, and strengthen the protection of intellectual property rights, Xi said. Xi's letter was read out by Liu He, Chinese vice premier and a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, who attended the opening ceremony of the conference via video link.

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## **Chinese Vice Premier Stresses Fostering High-caliber Teachers**

Chinese Vice Premier Sun Chunlan has stressed comprehensive and redoubled efforts to foster a contingent of high-caliber teachers in the run-up to China's 38th teachers' day, which falls on Saturday. Sun, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, met with representatives of outstanding teachers and normal school students in Beijing. She conveyed congratulations and greetings from the CPC Central Committee and the State Council to teachers and educators across the country. Sun noted the historic achievements made in nurturing educational talent since the 18th National Congress of the CPC in 2012. She called on the vast number of teachers nationwide to

promote the high-quality development of education and fulfill their duty to foster capable students who will contribute to and carry forward the mission of national rejuvenation. Sun urged teachers to cultivate themselves morally and professionally. She said they should live up to the expectations of the Party and the people and provide a suitable education for every child in the interest of their comprehensive development. Sun also called on Party committees and governments at all levels to prioritize cultivating high-caliber teachers, raise the quality of normal schools, and implement relevant policies to attract more teaching talents.

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## **China's Decade-long Efforts on Water Safety, Conservancy**

Over the past decade, China has engaged in all-round water management to ensure the water supply, optimize water allocation, improve flood and drought prevention, and improve the health of aquatic ecosystems. The country has managed to raise nearly 20 percent of the world's population with only 6 percent of the world's fresh water, overcoming the difficulties brought by the uneven spatial and temporal distribution of water resources.

### **WATER MANAGEMENT**

At a press conference on Tuesday, Minister of Water Resources Li Guoying said that China has controlled major floods in the past decade by continuously improving basin-based prevention systems, strengthening early-warning measures, drills and pre-planning, and using water conservancy infrastructure in a scientific and accurate manner. The country's annual average losses caused by floods accounted for 0.31 percent of its GDP in the past decade, falling from 0.57 percent in the previous 10 years, Li said. In tackling the unusually severe floods on several major rivers since last year, China has used thousands of large and medium-sized reservoirs with a flood retention capacity of 225.2 billion cubic meters, while 3,055 cities and towns and over 2.63 million hectares of farmland have been saved through the use of 12 flood retention areas. This year, in the face of the worst drought in the Yangtze River basin since 1961, China has also ensured the water security of 13.85 million people and the irrigation of more than 1.9 million hectares of autumn grain by allocating water from reservoirs in the basin, Li said.

To achieve the balanced spatial allocation of water resources, China has sped up the construction of a batch of major water diversion projects in the past decade, Li said, giving the example of parts of the South-to-North Water Diversion Project, which transferred 56.5 billion cubic meters of water from the south to the arid north, benefitting 150 million people. China is advancing the construction of a safe, efficient, green and orderly water system, Li added, noting that the total water supply capacity of the water conservancy projects increased to 890 billion cubic meters in 2021 from 700 billion cubic meters in 2012. The country has also seen the rapid expansion of

investment in water conservancy projects, with completed investment amounting to 6.66 trillion yuan (about 966 billion U.S. dollars) in the past decade, five times as much as that of the previous 10 years, according to Zhang Xiangwei, an official with the ministry. This investment, supported a batch of key flood prevention projects in major river basins and the water management work in small and medium-sized rivers, facilitated risk elimination and reinforcement at reservoirs, and funded dozens of cross-basin and cross-region water diversion projects.

## **WATER SAFETY, PROTECTION**

China has made notable progress on ensuring water security for rural residents and the supply of agricultural water resources over the past decade. The country has guaranteed the safety of drinking water for 280 million rural residents and raised the penetration rate of rural tap water to 84 percent, said Chen Mingzhong, an official with the ministry. By the end of 2021, 8.27 million rural water supply projects had been completed nationwide, able to serve 900 million people, Chen said. In the past decade, over 7,000 large and medium-sized irrigation areas were built in China, with an effective irrigated farmland area of 69.13 million hectares, which accounted for 54 percent of the country's arable land and produced 75 percent of the country's grain, according to Li. With limited water resources, water conservation has been high on China's agenda. Chen said that since the country released an action plan on water conservancy in 2019, efforts have been made on several fronts, including water conservation in agriculture, industry, urban areas and other key areas, as well as through sci-tech innovation.

In 2021, China's total water use was kept below 610 billion cubic meters, while water consumption per 10,000 yuan of GDP and water consumption per 10,000 yuan of industrial added value dropped by 45 percent and 55 percent from 2012, respectively, Chen added. In addition to the promotion of more reasonable water consumption and the reduction of waste, the past decade has also witnessed China's strive to improve the quality of the water through ecological protection. With over 1.2 million people appointed as river and lake chiefs in recent years, such bodies of water in China have benefitted from environmental protection. Precise measures can be taken to address water pollution and improve water ecology according to local conditions, Li said. The country has also racked up achievements in resolving problems such as soil erosion and the over-exploitation of ground water in some areas, reviving the vitality of more and more aquatic systems.

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## **Chinese Premier Stresses Continuous Efforts to Promote Mass Entrepreneurship, Innovation**

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang on Thursday stressed continuous efforts to promote mass entrepreneurship and innovation, and pool wisdom and strengths to nurture

market entities and foster new economic drivers. Li, also a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, made the remarks when addressing the launch ceremony for the mass entrepreneurship and innovation week in Beijing. He also announced the launch of the week. Speaking highly of the booming development of entrepreneurship and innovation in China, Li noted that new market entities and startups create the majority of the 13 million new urban jobs every year. Coupled with reforms to streamline administrative procedures, China's push for mass entrepreneurship and innovation has nurtured market entities, Li said. The country's market entities have topped 160 million in number, nearly tripling from a decade ago and underpinning China's market-oriented economy, Li said.

Mass entrepreneurship and innovation have promoted the integrated development of large, medium-sized and small enterprises, and prompted the growth of new economic drivers, Li said. He also noted that emerging industries, new business models and new business forms have seen their share in China's total economic output continue to increase in recent years. Noting that entrepreneurship and innovation require a stable economic environment, Li said China introduced timely a policy package this year and made full use of its policy toolkit to steer the economy back on track. "China's tax refunds and tax and fee cuts this year clearly exceeded those of 2020," he said. He urged more efforts to continue protecting market entities' property rights and legitimate rights and interests in accordance with the law, and to fully implement tax and fee cuts, rent reduction and exemption and other favorable measures. Li also inspected several companies' entrepreneurship and innovation projects via video link, and encouraged them to make new achievements in innovation.

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## **Chinese Premier Stresses Fire Prevention, Control**

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang has called for resolute efforts to prevent major forest and grassland fires. 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 on the country's fire prevention and control work. Noting severe and complex fire prevention and control situation during the autumn and winter, the premier stressed efforts to consolidate the responsibilities of all relevant parties on fire prevention and control, beef up infrastructure facilities and improve firefighting capacity. He called for enhancing monitoring and early warning, with close attention paid to key areas and targets, as well as crucial periods of time. Efforts should also be made to improve contingency plans and emergency response, and to forestall major fire accidents, Li said. Attending a national teleconference on forest and grassland fire prevention and control on Friday, State Councilor Wang Yong called for solid preparations against major fires to guarantee the safety of people's lives and



property, as well as ecological security. Wang, also head of the national headquarters of forest and grassland fire prevention and control, underlined the need for greater efforts to identify and defuse risks and hidden dangers.

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## **ADB to Promote Green Transformation in Heilongjiang, PRC**

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$193 million loan for environmental improvement and low-carbon development in Heilongjiang, the People's Republic of China (PRC). The Heilongjiang Green Transformation Demonstration Project and Program will assist in the promotion of sustainable, climate-resilient, low-carbon, green development, as well as environmental restoration in the cities of Heihe and Suifenhe. "Heilongjiang has legacy environmental degradation and remains one of the poorest provinces in the PRC," said ADB Transport Specialist for East Asia Rebecca Stapleton. "ADB's intervention will support interagency cooperation, aligning environment and climate change policies at the national, provincial, and city levels."

The project adopts a system-wide approach looking at environmental restoration of rivers and wetlands and improving energy efficiency. It will holistically address sustainable green transformation across the main economic pillars and polluting sectors, including transport, logistics, water, industry, buildings, and tourism in the project areas. "This is the first ADB project combining an investment loan and a results-based lending program that provides a tailored instrument to address building energy efficiency," said ADB's Senior Environment Specialist for East Asia Yun Zhou. The project will develop infrastructure and implement services to enhance climate resilience and livability in Heihe and Suifenhe. Sustainable and efficient logistics facilities and technologies will be demonstrated by improving connectivity between key logistics and trade facilities. Aging residential buildings and public facilities will be refurbished under the project by improving thermal insulation to reduce energy loss, reducing waste, increasing green space, and upgrading drainage and sanitation facilities.

The project has a strong focus on institutional strengthening and improving interagency coordination through developing a sustainable procurement action plan, preparing a comprehensive nonmotorized transport network plan and citywide inclusive sanitation strategy for both cities, providing support for behavior change campaigns, and knowledge sharing. The total cost of the project is \$498.8 million, with \$305.8 million in counterpart financing from the government. It is expected to be completed in 2028. 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.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 09/22/2022

## **ADB to Help Improve Water and Wastewater Management in Jiayang County, PRC**

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$100 million loan to help improve sustainability, affordability, and safety in water and wastewater management services in Jiayang County, the People's Republic of China. Jiayang County has prioritized actions to improve access to safe drinking water and wastewater management services. Rapid urbanization and uncontrolled groundwater abstraction are already impacting groundwater levels. Water and soil pollution caused by inadequate drainage and sewerage infrastructure and extreme precipitation events will further aggravate water security. "Jiayang County faces water security issues related to supply, safe sanitation, floods, and environmental degradation," said ADB Urban Development Specialist (Climate Change) for East Asia Jinqiang Chen. "This project will address policy and institutional gaps in the water sector and mitigate climate risks, integrate water supply and delivery of sewerage services, and improve public health and the environmental quality of waterways." The Shandong West Jining Water Supply and Drainage Integration Program will improve the operational efficiency and cross-agency cooperation of water sector planning, management, and service delivery through effective policy and institutional reforms in integrated water management.

The program will fully integrate water supply and sewerage services delivery in the county with smart technology. To do this, the program will establish sustainable water supply with diverse water sources by increasing the capacity of existing groundwater treatment plants; constructing a reservoir and associated surface water treatment plant; building pipelines; and implementing a smart information system for improved planning and monitoring of water availability, surface and ground water diversions and abstraction, treatment, and distribution in urban and rural areas. The program will expand wastewater services and improve them with smart technology by constructing wastewater treatment plants and facilities, wastewater pump station, and wastewater network pipes; rehabilitating rivers; and separating sewer and drainage pipelines in prioritized urban areas. ADB's financing comprises a \$28 million policy-based loan and a \$72 million project loan. Total project cost is \$212.2 million, with \$112.2 million in counterpart financing from the government. It is expected to be completed in 2028.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 09/23/2022

## **Food Security Is Among China's Most Fundamental Interests**

Chinese President Xi Jinping, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission,

attaches great importance to food security. He has spoken of the issue on many occasions. The following are some highlights of his remarks. -- Food security is among the country's most fundamental interests. Of all things, eating matters most, and food is the most basic necessity of the people. -- China should be well-prepared, remain vigilant on food security, and adhere to the principle of self-sufficiency based on domestic grain production, guaranteed production capacity, moderate food imports and technological support. -- Farmland is the lifeline of grain production and the foundation of the sustainable development of the Chinese nation. Farmland is for farming and can only be used to grow crops, especially grain crops. The strictest possible system for the protection of farmland must be implemented. -- Party committees and governments at all levels must implement the major policies, decisions and plans of the CPC Central Committee on work concerning agriculture, rural areas and farmers, and enhance efforts to ensure grain security. -- Advancing agricultural modernization requires efforts not only of experts but also those of all farmers. The promotion and application of modern agricultural science and technologies and training of farmers must be strengthened, and all big grain growers must be organized to actively develop green, ecological, and efficient agriculture. -- If we Chinese people want to hold tight in hands our rice bowl, we must develop the seed industry on our own.

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## **China's Insurance Asset Management Association Registers Massive Product Value**

The value of products registered by the Insurance Asset Management Association of China, an organization for the country's insurance asset management industry, totaled 684.84 billion yuan (about 97.42 billion U.S. dollars) in the first eight months of the year. Of the 340 projects registered during the period, 316 were registered for debt investment plans and 14 for equity investment plans, with the fund size reaching 575.14 billion yuan and 43.49 billion yuan, respectively, the association said. Ten private equity insurance funds were established during the period, with the fund size reaching 66.21 billion yuan. By the end of August, the association handled the registration of 2,693 products with a fund size totaling 5.97 trillion yuan, said the association.

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## **China to Further Promote Intelligent Manufacturing**

China has released a plan to ramp up support for the creation of sound scenarios and the building of demonstration factories in the sector of intelligent manufacturing in 2022. The country plans to establish a batch of scenarios with high technical level

and application value, and make breakthroughs in terms of key technologies, equipment, software, standards and solutions, said a circular jointly issued by four government authorities including the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology. The plan will select scenarios that are replicable and can be generalized at factories and workshops, while constructing demonstration plants in fields including raw materials, equipment production, consumer goods and electronic information, among others.

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## **China's Agricultural Sci-tech Progress Supports Food Security**

Over the past decade, the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS) has made a series of agricultural sci-tech achievements, providing strong support for the country's food safety, according to the CAAS. In a summary of its work since 2012, the CAAS said its scientists discovered and cloned the genes that hindered the utilization of rice heterosis for the first time, providing important gene resources and feasible solutions to solve the problem of hybrid sterility in rice. The discovery of the key genes for the formation of the bitter taste in cucumber fruit is also one of the many key discoveries in crop omics and genetics made by the CAAS. It has also made breakthroughs in crop pest control and prevention, contributing to national food security. Focusing on the frequent occurrence of primary diseases and insect pests of major crops and alien invasive organisms, the CAAS carried out theoretical research and engineering system construction of whole chain prevention and control. It established a real-time monitoring and early warning technology system for fall armyworm prevention and developed a series of key technologies and programs to support the prevention and control of fall armyworm nationwide, which has been recommended globally by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.

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## **New Growth Drivers Gain Steam amid China's Innovation Push**

After constant efforts to push forward innovation-driven development, China has made visible progress in industrial upgrading, with new growth drivers emerging and new business forms flourishing, a recent report showed. In 2021, the industrial output of major high-tech manufacturers made up 15.1 percent of the total value-added industrial output, 5.7 percentage points higher than that in 2012, according to a new report released by the National Bureau of Statistics. The output of new energy vehicles last year was 28.2 times higher than that of 2014, while industrial robot output was 12.5 times higher than the 2014 figure, the report said. China's services sector has an improving structure. In 2021, the added value of information transmission, software and information technology services accounted for 7.2

percent of the added value of the services sector, up 2.5 percentage points from 2012.

### **INNOVATION-DRIVEN EFFORTS**

What is behind these stellar figures is China's perseverance in promoting scientific and technological innovation. In 2021, China invested 2.8 trillion yuan (about 393.2 billion U.S. dollars) in research and development (R&D), up by 1.7 times from 2012. The share of R&D expenditure in GDP stood at 2.44 percent, nearing the average level of Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries. At the end of 2021, the country had a total of 330,000 high-tech enterprises and 4,762 "little giant" companies, representatives of China's small and medium-sized enterprises that specialize in niche markets and are endowed with cutting-edge technologies and great potential. The number of authorized patents registered an average annual growth of 15.5 percent during the past 10 years. The government has also pooled efforts to optimize mechanisms to smoothen the financing channels for technology firms. The country launched the sci-tech innovation board in 2019 and the Beijing Stock Exchange in 2021, tilting financing more in favor of innovation-powered firms. Official data showed that 46 of the around 2,200 Chinese listed firms in emerging industries are valued at over 100 billion yuan each, up from zero 10 years ago.

### **BURGEONING NEW ECONOMY**

Changes in the Chinese economy gained momentum after the country switched gear to new growth drivers. Over the last decade, China has been promoting deep integration between the digital economy and the real economy. As a result, cashless transactions have become ubiquitous in daily life. Online shopping has become a bright spot in China's consumer market, as the online retail sales of physical goods exceeded 10.8 trillion yuan in 2021, accounting for 24.5 percent of the total retail sales of consumer goods, said the report. Driven by the record-setting sales volume of online retail, China's courier sector handled 108.3 billion parcels in 2021, surging by 18 times in the 2012-2021 period, reinforcing China's top status in the world in terms of express delivery volume. The report also highlighted the booming digital economy. The added value of core industries in the digital economy accounted for 7.8 percent of GDP in 2020 and the size of China's digital economy ranked second globally.

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### **JAPAN: Government Gives Go-Ahead on Wage Increases, but Companies Want Growth First**

According to a survey on wages conducted by Persol Research Institute in May 2022, 63.0% of company managers in Japan answered that without company growth, it would be difficult to make increases. It indicated that they were prioritizing growth over raising pay. However, the number of those in management who believed "wage

increases are an investment” were more than double those who thought “wage increases mean higher costs,” showing recognition that pay rises are needed as an investment for growth. Opinions were divided on whether the government should be involved in this discussion. At 40.6%, the factor most influencing the decision over increasing wages was “meeting budgets and results,” followed by “preventing employee turnover” (29.4%) and “economic trends” (27.9%). “Price trends” was the fourth largest factor. Requests from the government or the Japanese Trade Union Confederation (Rengō) were shown to have little influence over management decisions.

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## Japan's Intervention Unlikely to Stem Yen's Slide

Japan's currency intervention is likely to prove ineffective in overturning the underlying weakness of the yen against the U.S. dollar, even as its first attempt in 24 years in the foreign exchange market to strengthen its currency took immediate effect. The dollar briefly plummeted below 141 yen from a 24-year high near 146 yen Thursday after the government stepped into the market to stem the yen's slide. The action took the market somewhat by surprise, even though repeated warnings by Finance Minister Shunichi Suzuki against the yen's recent rapid decline to 24-year lows against the U.S. currency had left the market nervous, said Masahiro Yamaguchi, head of investment research at SMBC Trust Bank. An immediate sharp rally of the dollar looks difficult amid fears of another market intervention by Japanese authorities, at least for now. Still the dollar remains on course to return to the 145 yen level and possibly rise to 147.66 yen, a level unseen in more than 32 years, market analysts say.

"Until (the Bank of Japan) changes its policy, the yen will not stop falling as the impact of (currency) intervention will be limited," Yamaguchi said. The government's attempt is a "drop of water on a hot stone." Behind the yen's fall since early March is the BOJ's stubborn determination to maintain its monetary easing policy at a critical time when the Federal Reserve, like central banks in many other countries, is continuing its rate hike campaign to beat inflation. The Swiss National Bank on Thursday raised its benchmark interest rate by 0.75 percentage point, marking the end of an era of negative rates in Europe. Inflation is a less pressing concern in Japan, with price rises remaining relatively slow compared with the United States and European countries. Japan's core consumer prices in August rose 2.8 percent from a year earlier.

The BOJ left its ultraloose policy unchanged on Thursday, contrasting sharply with the Fed, which implemented a policy rate hike of 0.75 percentage point on Wednesday and suggested more aggressive increases to come. The divergence in approach will only widen the interest rate differential between the United States and

Japan, luring investors to the dollar. The rate gap is unlikely to shrink anytime soon, given BOJ Governor Haruhiko Kuroda said at a press conference Thursday that he does not anticipate rate hikes in the near future to prop up the pandemic-stricken economy. "When I say 'for the time being,' I don't mean two or three months. I'm talking about two or three years," said the governor, whose term as BOJ chief will end in April. The strength of the dollar also reflects the solid recovery of the world's biggest economy from the COVID-19 shock. "The yen will become naturally strong once the U.S. economy starts slowing down, which won't be until early next year," said Tomoichiro Kubota, senior market analyst at Matsui Securities Co.

Analysts say Japanese authorities could act again if the dollar climbs to around 145 yen, as seen in Thursday's intervention, and market players will be nervous about crossing that line. Masato Kanda, vice finance minister for international affairs, told reporters after the intervention that the ministry "will continue to watch foreign exchange movements with a sense of urgency." Analysts say yen-buying intervention is more difficult than yen-selling as authorities have to rely on foreign reserves to sell in the market. Japan's foreign reserves, mainly composed of securities and deposits denominated in foreign currencies, stood at \$1.29 trillion at the end of August, according to official data. Market participants are also skeptical that Japan will be able to continue intervening in the market. It would be difficult to get the nod from U.S. authorities as they are likely to be concerned about a dollar slide pushing up import costs and inflation, analysts said.

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## **Digital Minister Aims to Drag Japan Out of Analog Doldrums**

The politician tapped to help Japan keep pace with the digital age has his work cut out for him. After all, the nation known for Nintendo games, Lexus sports cars and other gadgetry galore also loves the fax machine and the traditional hanko seals that work as analog signatures. But Digital Minister Taro Kono has a reputation for no-nonsense action and for defying vested interests in high places. "I have no intention of playing coordinator," he told reporters in a small briefing that was, aptly, conducted online Friday. "If people don't listen, I am going to beat them up," he added with a laugh. Japan ranked 28th among 64 nations in digital competitiveness in 2021, little changed from five years before, according to a study by IMD, a Swiss-based independent academic organization, which looked at how well equipped nations are to encourage technological development and to leverage them for the future. The U.S. was No. 1, China No. 15. Kono, a former foreign minister and defense minister, has flaunted his digital savvy for years.

Kono's Japanese Twitter account, which has drawn 2.5 million followers, features everything from a bowling video to policy commentary. Fluent in English, having attended Georgetown University, he also has an English Twitter account with 70,000

followers. In a YouTube video in September, he urged people to get a My Number Card, a digital identity card for Japanese citizens and residents that they can use for online government applications and link to a driver's license, library card or online banking. But Kono knows it will take more than social media stardom to wrest Japan out of its analog doldrums. He noted the endeavor doesn't have to be complicated; people will naturally choose what's convenient. "Even a child knows that a seal doesn't really work as personal identification," he said, while adding that he loves Japanese seals as craftwork. "There is a mindset that it's someone else's problem," he said of society's complacency. During the coronavirus pandemic, when remote working became widespread around the world, Japanese realized how far behind they had fallen, Kono said.

The Digital Agency was set up in Japan last year to nurture competitiveness in digital technology. Some skepticism remains. Critics say the idea of "a digital transformation" is already outdated and only Japan is still talking so much about it. In 2018, the minister in charge of cybersecurity, Yoshitaka Sakurada, became a target of ridicule when he didn't know what a USB port was. Yet technology experts have pinned great hopes for what Kono might achieve. Kono has always stood apart among ruling Liberal Democratic Party lawmakers. His father was a prominent lawmaker known as a maverick. His grandfather was also a legendary politician. And rock the boat is what Kono needs to do. His agency has shown by example by becoming more open and diverse, adding people from the private sector and other walks of life who may have ideas on the change Japan so critically needs. What will be his benchmark measure for success? "When there are smiles everywhere," Kono said.

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## **Gov't Eyes New Economic Package to Fight Inflation, Weak Yen**

A new economic package to be drawn up next month will focus on mitigating the blow from rising prices and a weaker yen, spurring wage growth and revitalizing the economy through investment, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said Thursday. In addition to "bold measures" focusing on the three priority areas, the package would also include launching a new mechanism to help cope with higher electricity bills amid surging natural gas prices caused by Russia's war in Ukraine, Kishida told reporters, adding that the details have yet to be worked out. The envisaged package comes on top of relief measures already announced to mitigate the impact of higher energy and food prices on households. "We have seen electricity bills jump 20 to 30 percent from a year earlier, putting heavier burdens on households and companies," Kishida said at the Prime Minister's Office. Some senior lawmakers from the ruling Liberal Democratic are calling for an economic package worth around 30 trillion yen.

Kishida will instruct officials on Friday to speed up the drafting of the package, as the government plans to compile an extra budget and seek its passage during an



extraordinary Diet session from Monday. The yen's sharp drop against the U.S. dollar has dealt a blow to Japanese households already struggling amid the rising cost of living, heightening concerns among policymakers. A tumbling yen has inflated import prices of energy, food and other raw materials for resource-scarce Japan. "Social and economic activity has been returning to near normal. But soaring energy and food prices have hit households and concerns about a global economic slowdown have become a risk to the Japanese economy," Kishida said. Japan's economy has been slow to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic fallout, and the rising cost of living is now denting consumer sentiment. Economists expect economic growth to continue but at a moderate pace.

Last week, the Cabinet decided to use 3.48 trillion yen in reserve funds for the current fiscal year from April to fund the relief measures, which include giving 50,000 yen to each low-income household and retaining subsidies to oil wholesalers to limit the rise in retail gasoline and kerosene prices. Inflation is one of the top priorities for Kishida. The prime minister, nearly a year in office, has seen his support ratings plunge and public dissatisfaction grow over his government's decision to hold a state funeral Tuesday for slain former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and dubious links between ruling party lawmakers and the Unification Church. "I'm aware of the various views and criticisms expressed by Japanese people," Kishida said. "We take them seriously and learn from this." Japan was split over whether it was appropriate hold a state funeral using taxpayers' money for Abe, the country's longest-serving prime minister who was both influential and divisive. Abe was gunned down during an election campaign speech in July by a man who thought the former premier had links to the Unification Church, a religious group that he held a grudge against.

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## **SOUTH KOREA: Yoon Pledges Support for People with Technical Skills**

President Yoon Suk-yeol met Wednesday with young people training to compete in a world skills competition and pledged to support the advancement of people with technical skills. Yoon visited the Global Institute for Transferring Skills in Incheon, west of Seoul, to meet with participants in the WorldSkills Competition 2022 Special Edition, which kicked off last week in 15 countries and regions. South Korea will host events for eight out of a total 61 skills, including cloud computing and 3D digital game art, in Goyang, northwest of Seoul, next month. Yoon toured the institute and watched competitors train in furniture making, mobile app development and photoelectronic technology, before holding a group meeting with 48 members of the South Korean team. "The skilled professional and technical work force of our industrial sites was the driving force of our economy's rapid growth," he said during the meeting, noting South Korea has won the biennial competition 19 times.

Yoon compared the skilled work force to the military, saying no number of advanced weapons, such as F-35 or F-22 fighter jets, could be deployed for national defense without the trained and professional service members that can use them. "You are the connecting link between applied science and technology, and consumers," he said. The meeting was also attended by representatives of companies that have actively hired skilled young people and sponsored their participation in the competition, including Samsung Electronics and Emons Furniture. Yoon said technology holds the key to the nation's development and future, and promised to do his best to build a country "overflowing" with technically skilled people, his office said. He also emphasized the importance of creating a society where such people are given special treatment, it said.

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## **Korea Herald to Hold Forum on Tech Reshaping Humanity**

The Korea Herald, the nation's largest English newspaper by circulation, will hold its annual business forum on Oct. 19 to shed light on the latest technology trends that could change the way people live and the ways to make the transition smooth and effective. Under the theme of "Humanity in Tech," the forum invites policymakers, industry leaders and diplomats to discuss what technological advances mean for people-to-people exchanges and the life adjustments needed to make the best of progress to come. Keynote speaker Don Tapscott, executive chairman of the Blockchain Research Institute and author of the global bestseller "Blockchain Revolution," will offer his insight into the future of technology and humanity, while Alan Jo, chief product officer at AI investment firm Qraft Technologies, will share what he describes as the "Korean AI experience" in Wall Street.

Lee Jung-ho, co-founder and CEO of Rainbow Robotics, will talk about the future of the robotics industry. "A group of diverse robots" is what the company is after, Lee says, stressing the role of "collaborative robots" as demand for work support is increasingly growing amid a global push to deal with an aging workforce. Meanwhile, Chang Dong-seon, CEO of Curious Brain Lab whose expertise lies in cognitive and behavioral sciences, will explain how the technological progress will affect human communication, while Sung Nako, who heads internet giant Naver's AI platform, will address steps needed to make a life with AI sustainable. As special speakers, Robert S. Langer, co-founder of US vaccine maker Moderna, and Jerome Kim, director general of the International Vaccine Institute, will lay out challenges and opportunities for mRNA vaccines. The forum will be held in the Grand Ballroom at Four Seasons Hotel Seoul from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

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## **Yoon Says Digital Technology Should Expand Freedom**

South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol attended a digital forum in New York on Wednesday, saying digital technologies should be shared and used to expand freedoms. Yoon attended the Digital Vision Forum at New York University as part of his visit to the city for the U.N. General Assembly. In a speech, he offered his vision for a digital order to be sought jointly by the people of the world to realize the universal values of freedom, human rights, peace and solidarity, his office said. "President Yoon explained that digital technologies must contribute to expanding freedom and that it is important to produce economic and social value through digital data," it said in a press release. He also stressed that the digital ecosystem should be open for participation by everyone, while expressing his commitment to South Korea fulfilling its role as a model nation in the digital era and to crafting a national digital strategy to share its achievements with the citizens of the world, it said.

Yoon later met with Korean American scientists after the forum and emphasized the importance of scientific and technological innovations in increasing freedoms in South Korea. Among the scientists in attendance were Kim Young-kee, a physics professor at the University of Chicago and the first Asian woman to be elected president of the American Physical Society, and Nam Chang-yong, a scientist at the Brookhaven National Laboratory (BNL) and recipient of the Battelle Inventor of the Year award.

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## **Yoon Underlines Digital Freedom at NYU Forum**

President Yoon Suk-yeol has emphasized the importance of digital technologies in contributing to the expansion of freedom, a day after he called for collective efforts to decrease the digital gap across the world in his speech at the United Nations General Assembly. "We have to gather our wisdom so that digital technologies can contribute to expanding freedom and set up an autonomously and rationally normative system," said Yoon during his keynote speech at the Digital Vision Forum held by New York University on Wednesday in New York. The South Korean president stressed the need for fair access to digital data for everyone, adding that all people should be able to utilize digital data to create economic and social values. Yoon voiced caution against digital transformation efforts that can widen the digital gap to worsen the polarization of countries.

"The digital ecosystem must be open for anyone and all people should be able to enter it and be active in it. I believe that bold support for increasing digital accessibility and convenience should be provided socially and globally," he said. Yoon pointed to South Korea's digital platform government initiatives as the beginning of new welfare that can look after people in need through digital technology, adding that it will open a new chapter of digital democracy. "As a leading

country in the advanced digital era, we will share our achievements with global citizens and people in developing countries. In order to do so, South Korea will precisely establish a digital strategy and gather nationwide efforts to push for it," he said. The Ministry of Science and ICT said it will announce a pangovernmental road map for the country's next step in taking a digital leap before the end of this month. The road map is expected to contain a strong push for digital innovation across the economy, society and government with an aim to secure world-class digital capabilities in artificial intelligence, software and data usage, according to a ministry official.

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### **Korea Eyes World No. 3 Spot in Digital Competitiveness by 2027**

The South Korean government on Wednesday unveiled a blueprint to become a global leader in digital innovation with the goal of becoming the world's third most digitally competitive by 2027. "We will bring up our global (artificial intelligence) competitiveness to No. 3 in the world and double the data market size to 50 trillion won (\$34.7 billion) or bigger," said President Yoon Suk-yeol as he chaired the eighth pangovernmental meeting on economy and people's livelihood at the Kimdaejung Convention Center in Gwangju. Korea's AI competitiveness is ranked sixth in the world, Yoon said, referencing Stanford's AI Index Report from 2021. The announcement of the blueprint followed Yoon's consecutive speeches on the importance of combined efforts to decrease the digital gap across the world at the United Nations General Assembly and the role of digital technologies in expanding freedom for all at the Digital Vision Forum held by New York University in New York last week.

Under the blueprint, the Ministry of Science and ICT set out five main strategies and 19 objectives. The strategies focus on securing world-leading digital abilities, expanding the digital economy, creating a digitally inclusive society, establishing a digital platform government and innovating digital culture. The government will intensively invest in research and development for artificial intelligence, AI semiconductors, 5G and 6G networks, quantum, metaverse and cybersecurity, the ministry said. Korea has allocated 1.02 trillion won for securing core technologies of AI semiconductors and 302 billion won for developing next-generation AI technologies through 2026. The plan includes fostering over 2,000 software service companies by 2027. According to the ministry, the government will aim to complete setting up the infrastructure for a nationwide 5G network by 2024 and secure the standard patent for 6G technology while pushing for a trial service of the world's first pre-6G network in 2026. The ministry expects the country to increase its competency in digital technology, industry and talent under the blueprint to earn it the No. 3 spot on the Swiss International Institute for Management Development's annual world digital competitiveness rankings in 2027.

According to the IMD's world digital competitiveness rankings released earlier in the day, Korea ranked eighth among the 63 countries assessed by the IMD. Korea climbed four spots from the previous year's rankings. Of the countries with a population of 20 million or more, Korea took the No. 2 spot, only behind the US. The IMD rated Seoul's adaptability to new technology as the world's best and the country's business agility as the second best among the 63 evaluated countries. "The Korean digital strategy is our country's digital blueprint and we have drafted the state-level policy to show our strong will to move toward leading global digital innovation, which was declared through the 'New York Plan,'" said Lee Jong-ho, minister at the Ministry of Science and ICT. "Combining all of the government capabilities, we will carry out the strategies to create results that the public can actually feel and share the outcome with people across the world as an exemplary country of digital innovation."

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## **S. Korea's Global Digital Competitiveness Ranking Climbs to 8th Spot IMD**

South Korea's global ranking in terms of digital technology competitiveness climbed to No. 8 this year, the science ministry said Wednesday, citing the International Institute for Management Development (IMD). According to the ministry, South Korea climbed four notches from last year's 12th spot in the 2022 IMD World Digital Competitiveness Ranking report. The country ranked 19th in 2017 and later reached the 14th and 10th spots in 2018 and 2019, respectively. The IMD, a Switzerland-based international institution, has been releasing the annual report since 2017. It measures a country's ability to adopt and explore digital technologies leading to transformations in government, business and society. Among Asian-Pacific countries, South Korea was ranked second highest after Singapore, which came in fourth place. Denmark was the No. 1 nation in terms of digital competitiveness, and the United States came in second place. Vice Science Minister Park Yoon-kyu said the government will continue to improve the country's digital competitiveness by faithfully implementing its digital strategy.

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## **Democratizing Legal Information Through Technology**

Legislative officials and experts from eight Asian countries gathered in Seoul on Thursday to discuss advances and challenges in legislation in times of digital technology. Speaking at the annual Asian Legislative Experts Symposium, South Korean Minister of Government Legislation Lee Wan-kyu said artificial intelligence and big data technologies brought forward a "new era of legal tech industry," which is

expected to make legislative process “more democratic.” For so long, access to legal information used to be the exclusive preserve of governments and legal experts. “But the advent of technology helps make that information more transparent and easily accessible to the people,” he said in an address. Legislation is “yet another domain where digital technology has demonstrated its usefulness,” said Hwang Jong-Sung, the president of the National Information Society Agency.

“Transparency is quintessential to the rule of law, and I think it is not an exaggeration to say that digital technology has helped achieved that transparency on a greater level,” he said. Kim Kye-Hong, the president of the Korea Legislation Research Institute, said the symposium took place as Asian countries are beginning to operate digital legislative systems. “South Korea has built digital systems to manage its laws and law information, with the use of technology, the country is seeking to further improve its legislative capacity,” he said. South Korea, which leads in the United Nations’ E-Government Development Index, began digitizing its legislative procedure more than 20 years ago, according to the Government Legislation Ministry. The ministry’s legislation editing software, introduced in 2018, utilizes a database that contains policies and legislative plans across government ministries and institutions as well as past legislations.

The ministry’s plain law division runs a website designed to provide an open and convenient access to legal information and social media services that inform subscribers of updates on legislations. But despite the efforts, the majority of South Koreans say laws and legislations are hard to understand. In the ministry’s 2020 survey, 89.1 percent of respondents said they have experienced difficulties understanding laws. “The challenge exists in reaching out to younger generations, especially, who surveys show respond better to visual information rather than texts,” said the head of the ministry’s plain law division, Son Mun-Su. Lee, the government legislation minister, said, “Over the last nine events, experts gathered to discuss legislative challenges and ways to tackle them in various areas ranging from land and transport to natural disaster safety to public health.” He went on, “The symposium hopes to serve as a medium for enhancing exchange and cooperation among legislative organizations of Asia countries.”

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## **Ruling Party Urges Govt. to Ease Antivirus Measures**

The ruling People Power Party (PPP) on Thursday called on the government to ease antivirus curbs, such as a virus test for inbound travelers, and an indoor mask mandate for toddlers and children, amid signs that the virus wave is slowing down. The virus wave, triggered by the spread of a highly contagious omicron variant, has been on a decline after a resurgence in July that later peaked above 180,000 cases in mid-August. As part of efforts to curb the public’s inconvenience, the government

lifted all outdoor mask mandates starting this week. "While many people are wearing masks both indoors and outdoors as part of personal antivirus measures, there are growing voices questioning the effectiveness of wearing masks," Rep. Joo Ho-young, the PPP's floor leader, said during the party's policy consultation meeting with government health officials.

"Some experts view that wearing masks stunt children's speaking, and negatively affect their social and emotional developments. Many disabled people have also spoken about their inconveniences," Joo said, urging the government to find the right balance between easing people's inconveniences while fending off the virus. Rep. Sung Il-jong, the PPP's chief policymaker, proposed scrapping a mandatory PCR test within the first 24 hours of entry into the country, noting how South Korea and China are the only countries that conduct such a test after entry. Government officials pledged to look into ways to flexibly adjust antivirus measures in place. "Going forward, we will improve antivirus measures that are seen as less effective based on the feedback of experts, resurgence trends and policy feasibility," Peck Kyong-ran, Commissioner at the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency, said. Peck, however, voiced caution against a possible resurgence of the virus in the winter and pledged to seamlessly carry out additional vaccinations.

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## **S. Korea Ranks 3rd in U.N. Global E-Gov't Readiness Index**

South Korea ranked third in the United Nation's global e-government readiness index this year, trailing behind Denmark and Finland, but topped the list among Asian countries, the government said Thursday. The index, produced by the U.N. Department of Economic and Social Affairs every other year, rates 193 member countries in terms of digital government in three categories -- capturing the scope and quality of online services, status of telecommunication infrastructure and existing human capacity. In this year's index, South Korea topped the list in online service and telecommunication categories but scored the lowest in the human capacity category among top 10 countries, according to the interior ministry. According to the rankings, South Korea is the only Asian country among the top 10 this year, and also the only country in the world to rank the top three for seven consecutive times since 2010, the ministry said. In 2020, South Korea ranked the second, trailing behind Denmark, according to the ministry. The survey is the only global report that assesses the e-government development status of all U.N. member states by measuring performance of countries relative to one another.

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## **Korea-China Forum Seeks Bilateral Growth in Technology**

The Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat held the 2022 Korea-China Smart Manufacturing Industry-Academia-Research Forum Thursday to discuss industrial growth in both countries.

Figures from universities, research centers and government bodies in Korea and China attended the event held both online and offline in central Seoul. Gao Xiang, the head of the China Science and Technology Exchange Center, opened the event with a congratulatory speech. "Two countries (Korea and China) are geographically close and have maintained a friendly relationship for a long time. During the 30 years since establishing diplomatic ties, the political trust has deepened with vigorous interchanges," he said in Chinese. "Now, we are a community that shares fate." "Smart manufacturing can invigorate the economy being a pivot of modern industrial growth," he said. Rep. Yoon Young-chan from Democratic Party of Korea followed with a pre-recorded speech. "In the end, the science technology must develop in a way to benefit humans," Yoon said. "If more Korean and Chinese experts could meet with each other to discuss the changes within the high-tech industry, the two countries will excel not just in Asia but across the globe."

Chinese Ambassador to Korea Xing Hai Ming also supported the interchange between the two countries. "Artificial intelligence is the most innovative technology. The digital economy has been recording an unprecedented growth and spread," he said. "The strong will to cooperate on an industry-academia-research level will play an important role in encouraging the growth of related industries" he said. Lee Wun-gyoo, head of Kyonggi University, Lee Seung-jae from the Korea AI Blockchain Convergence, Lim Hyun-ki, professor at the Division of AI Computer and Engineering at Kyonggi University and more attended the event to give a speech on the growth of the artificial intelligence technology. Chinese experts from Ningbo University and Zhejiang University and more also took the podium, explaining how the growth of artificial technology could be used. Ou Bo Qian, head of Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat, Li Zhi Gang from Ningbo City, Lu Chao Feng from Ningbo University, Tan Jian Yong from Zhejiang University were also in attendance.

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## **S. Korea Seeks to Cut Public Energy Consumption by 10 Pct**

The government decided to enforce measures to reduce energy consumption by public institutions by 10 percent starting next month to cope with soaring energy costs, the finance ministry said Friday. All central and provincial public institutions are required to implement energy-saving steps, such as limiting the indoor temperature of their buildings and turning off exterior lighting, and the results will be reflected to the government's annual management appraisal of the public firms, according to the ministry. "Given expected high energy demand in winter and Russia's possible reduction in energy supplies, the current energy crisis is feared to continue for the time being," Finance Minister Choo Kyung-ho said during an emergency economic



ministers' meeting. The government will also launch a nationwide campaign to encourage people to join the efforts and will strive further to reform the economic structure to achieve energy efficiency, he added. The government also asked major companies to set their respective energy-saving goals and vowed to push for extending tax incentives for the development of related technologies. Global energy prices have surged over the prolonged war in Ukraine. The price of liquefied natural gas soared to US\$55 per million British thermal units in August, compared with \$10 in the first quarter of last year.

High energy prices led the country to suffer a trade deficit. Last month, the trade deficit came to \$9.47 billion, the largest amount to date, as imports jumped 28.2 percent on-year also to a record high of \$66.15 billion. The government also vowed to "normalize" electricity rates and other utility bills to promote efficient energy use and to ensure stable energy supplies by preventing public utility firms from suffering huge losses. Earlier in the day, Korea Electric Power Corp. announced its decision to raise the adjusted unit fuel cost -- a key part of the country's electricity rates -- by 2.5 won (US\$0.002) per kilowatt hour for the fourth quarter. It comes on top of the 4.9-won increase the government has already decided to apply from October. The government also decided to raise natural gas prices for households by 15.9 percent, and those for commercial use will jump up to 17.4 percent. During the meeting, Industry Minister Lee Chang-yang likened the current energy situation to the oil shock in the 1970s, and vowed to "mobilize every means available" to overcome the crisis and to achieve energy-efficient economic and industrial structures.

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## South-East Asia

### **MYANMAR: Inaugurating Lancang-Mekong Data Center**

Myanmar has launched the Lancang-Mekong Project's Data Center in the capital city of Nay Pyi Taw, state-run Myanmar News Agency reported on Wednesday. The data center was developed for projects being implemented under the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC) Special Fund, said the state media. Speaking at the inauguration ceremony on Tuesday, Union Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Tin Htut Oo said the data center will facilitate access to the data and index about projects on agriculture, livestock, aquaculture and rural development via the information exchange corridor of the Lancang-Mekong countries. He urged the staff of the center to work on capacity building for the staff and drafting frameworks for interconnection among the countries. The center will help improve the practices and understandings on analyzing, compiling and collecting of data on food production in Myanmar, said the union minister, adding that it will also help promote cooperation among the countries. The data center is part of the 31 projects being implemented by Myanmar's Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation under the LMC Special

Fund, it added. The six Lancang-Mekong countries comprise China, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam and Thailand.

*From <https://english.news.cn> 08/31/2022*

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## **Myanmar Speeds Up COVID-19 Control Measures as Transmission Increases**

Myanmar has accelerated its control and prevention measures for COVID-19 as transmission increases in the country, according to media reports. The measures included boosting vaccinations, encouraging and sharing knowledge of wearing a face mask, providing hand basins in the markets, spraying disinfectant, and continuously publishing related information, announcements, notices, prevention guidance and strategies through media. Moreover, ensuring that COVID-19 vaccines are stored at standard refrigerated conditions, and carrying out testing to the people who return from abroad and foreign tourists at the airport are also included. Recently, the country has been faced with an increase in daily cases whereas the majority of the cases are domestically transmitted. The daily positivity rate is 2.43 percent. On Saturday, the country reported 262 new cases of COVID-19 but no more related deaths. The Southeast Asian country detected its first COVID-19 cases in March 2020.

*From <https://english.news.cn/> 09/10/2022*

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## **THAILAND: AIS Partners with China's ZTE to Launch 5G Innovation Center**

Thailand's leading mobile operator AIS and China's ZTE on Tuesday jointly launched a 5G innovation center in an effort to facilitate local infrastructure upgrading and elevate the nation's digital economy. Thai Minister of Digital Economy and Society Chaiwut Thanakamanusorn said at the launching ceremony that he believed the cooperation between Thai and Chinese companies will certainly help Thailand upgrade its digital technology and achieve the digitalization goals of the national strategy Thailand 4.0. Chaiwut is optimistic that 5G technology will further improve the overall quality of life in the country. Kan Trakulhoon, AIS's chairman of the Board of Directors, said that the cooperation with ZTE is more than a mere partnership. "We have a common goal of seeing Thailand release its full potential and to emerge as an even more powerful digital nation." Chinese companies such as ZTE have been actively contributing to the enhancement of synergy between Thailand 4.0 and the Belt and Road Initiative, said Wang Liping, minister counselor for economic and commercial affairs of the Chinese Embassy in Thailand, highlighting the innovation center as an important collaboration project. ZTE's CEO Xu Ziyang said via live streaming that the center will also serve as a research platform to discover new technology needs and test ZTE's latest technology for local application. The

innovation center is a showroom of 5G products and solutions provided by both parties to help level up the capabilities of the nation's smart 5G network.

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## **VIETNAM: Gov't to Help Ensure Sustainable Development of Real Estate Market**

Prime Minister Phạm Minh Chính has ordered relevant agencies not to tighten bank loans to the real estate industry irrationally, but inspections must be intensified to detect and strictly handle violations in accordance with the law. It was among several solutions in Directive No. 13/CT-TTg released this week by the Prime Minister to ensure the stable, healthy and sustainable development of the real estate market. The move was made after the development of the real estate industry revealed shortcomings and inadequacies, which caused the industry to not really grow sustainably and pose potential risks. Meanwhile, the real estate market plays an important role in economic stabilisation, inflation control, and growth. Under the directive, the PM has also required attention to preventing tax avoidance and ensuring the harmony of interests of the State, people and businesses in the real estate industry. The PM has emphasised the need to step up decentralisation and pilot mechanisms and policies to create new momentum for the real estate market. It is also key to combine fiscal and monetary policies harmoniously and effectively, implement monetary policy flexibly, safely and cautiously, and reasonably use fiscal policy measures to support the development of the real estate market.

Other tasks include assessing the supply and demand precisely and accurately, identifying market segments to devise suitable policies, and stepping up communications work. According to the directive, the Ministry of Construction was asked to quickly study and perfect relevant legal regulations, develop an information system, and accelerate cashless payment in property transactions. According to the directive, the amended Housing Law and the amended Law on Real Estate will be submitted to the National Assembly for approval to create a legal framework for the real estate business. The Ministry of Construction was tasked with presenting quarterly reports on the domestic market to the PM and proposing solutions to develop the market healthily. The leader asked the Ministry of Finance to control the capital mobilisation of real estate firms in the stock market to prevent speculation and consolidate tax policies, making them match the present situation. The Ministry of Planning and Investment will instruct localities to streamline administrative procedures and work to attract more investment in the sector. At the same time, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment will coordinate with the Ministries of Finance and Justice to study and review legal regulations on land-use rights auctions. The State Bank of Vietnam has been urged to monitor credit for real estate and prioritise social housing projects. The PM said cities and provinces should publicise lists of projects, land funds, and procedures to lure investors and facilitate their

operations.

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## **Cần Thơ City Pilots Cashless Payment at Traditional Market**

The Cần Thơ City Department of Industry and Trade has tied up with The Việt Nam Post and Telecommunication Group to trial non-cash payment at An Thới Market. Shoppers at the market in Bình Thủy District are now able to pay for their purchases without using cash as part of the city's plans to embrace financial technology. Some 150 traders in the market accept digital payments via VNPT Money using their phone number, QR code or bank. Hà Vũ Sơn, the department's director, said cashless payment is inevitable and offers great convenience. His department would go on to introduce cashless payment at 107 traditional markets in the city besides supermarkets, commercial centres and convenience stores, he said. Payment solutions and infrastructure have been developing rapidly and integrated with a wide variety of products and services, and been well-received by consumers for their security, speed and convenience. Government support policies during the pandemic, which included e-banking fee reductions and other incentives to encourage consumers to reduce cash-based transactions, have resulted in the rapid development of cashless payment technology in the country. Nguyễn Thị Thùy Trang, a vendor at An Thới Market, said non-cash payment has been very convenient, especially during the epidemic, and safe for both customers and sellers. Nguyễn Quốc Việt, deputy director of VNPT Cần Thơ, said online payments are providing people with more choices about payment methods, contributing to reducing people's travelling time and expenses.

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## **South Asia**

### **INDIA: Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav Launches Mascot 'Prakriti' & Plastic Waste Management Initiatives**

The Union Minister of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Bhupendra 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.

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## **Cabinet Nod to Rs 192 Crore Aid for Saving Farmers' Crops from Damages**

In an attempt to provide much-needed relief to the farmers facing challenges of sorts, the Uttar Pradesh Cabinet, under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, approved an aid of Rs 192.57 crore for them on Tuesday. The amount will be used for weed control as well as safe storage of standing and ready crops in the field, using various ecological resources in the next five years. In this regard, the required chemical and biological pesticides will be given to the farmers on a grant from the Agricultural Defence Unit. A proposal to give a 50 per cent subsidy on storage units has also been approved for the safe storage of crops. It is worth noting that farmers suffer huge crop losses due to weeds, insects, pests, damage due to unsafe storage, rats, etc every year. To reduce the loss of farmers, the Cabinet approved an assistance of Rs 192,57,75,000 for a period of five years from 2022-23 to 2026-27. The government will spend Rs 34.17 crore in the current financial year for the benefit of farmers. It is noteworthy that farmers suffer 15-20 per cent of crop loss due to weeds, 26 per cent due to crop diseases, 20 per cent due to insect diseases, 7 per cent due to lack of proper storage, 6 per cent due to rats and 8 per cent due to other reasons on an average every year. In view of this, the Cabinet has decided to reduce farmers' loss and boost their income through proper and safe storage of their crops. Apart from this, the Cabinet has decided to give 50 per cent subsidy to the farmers on long term storage of foodgrains in bakharis (storage houses) with a capacity of 2 to 5 quintals. The government will be spending Rs 41.42 lakh in this regard under Kisan Yojana from the year 2022 to 2027.

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## **Hardeep Singh Puri Launches the Leaders in Climate Change Management Program to Help Urban Professionals Champion Climate Action in India**

In conjunction with the World Environment Day that was observed on June 5, the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) and World Resources Institute (WRI) India, jointly announced 'Leaders in Climate Change Management' (LCCM), a practice-based learning program today. It aims at building capacity among urban professionals to lead climate action across sectors and geographies in India. To facilitate this face-to-face learning program, the Administrative Training Institute (ATI), Mysuru, also signed a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with NIUA and WRI India, becoming the first delivery partner of the LCCM program. LCCM envisions capacitating 5,000 professionals, including mid to junior-level government officials and frontline workers, and preparing them to champion climate change adaptation and mitigation solutions towards a coordinated effort to achieve India's climate commitments. The launch also marked the achievements of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs towards India's urban climate goals. The Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs Hardeep Singh Puri, launched the learning program and a half-day workshop today to build capacities among climate leaders in Indian cities.

In his keynote address, he said, "It is most appropriate and fitting that we are launching the (LCCM) program today immediately after the celebration of World Environment Day yesterday. This program is another initiative in a long line of government interventions to not only combat climate change but also to build a new path of sustainable development that fulfills our economic conditions." Puri said, "In the last eight years, the Central government has taken many concrete steps in pushing the sustainability agenda forward. At COP26 in Glasgow, the PM announced India's aggressive agenda on climate change through the Panch Amrit action plan which envisages India becoming a net-zero emission country by 2070. The LCCM program launched today, seeks to not only identify hundreds of climate leaders but also focus on how these leaders can be oriented in terms of their training and how will they move forward. The very fact that we are thinking about this is a revolutionary step,". At COP26 last year, PM Narendra Modi proposed a five-fold strategy – Panch Amrit – to global leaders, extending India's co-operation to meet the 1.5 degrees Celsius targets. The LCCM program, designed and implemented in partnership with the United Nation Environment Programme (UNEP) and Indian School of Business (ISB), aims to strengthen India's workforce to achieve this goal. LCCM is a blended learning program for urban practitioners looking to upskill and prepare themselves to deliver effective climate action. The program has four phases: the first phase- is an online learning module that can be completed over eight weeks; the next includes face-to-face sessions spanning four to six days; the third phase mandates participants to complete a project over six to eight months and attending exposure

visits; and the final phase includes networking and establishing a community of practice.

The online learning will be hosted on the National Urban Learning Platform (NULP), the capacity building arm of NIUA. It will also be hosted and supported by ATI, Mysuru. The program aims to sign similar MoUs with ATIs across India over the next few months. The Minister also launched the Climate Data Observatory 2.0 website, Knowledge Product on Public Spaces, Urban Outcomes Framework 2022 – Data Collection Portal, and Citizen Engagement for Urban Transport Compendium, to celebrate another milestone achieved by NIUA in the urban environment sector. The National Climate Photography Award Winners and Stage One qualifying cities for Transport 4 All Innovation Challenge were also announced. Kunal Kumar, Joint Secretary, MoHUA, said, “To achieve India’s Climate Change goals, we need to have Innovation, Participation, Technology, Integration and Capacity Optimization. We have already started on this journey through various missions of the Government of India, including the Smart Cities Mission. MoHUA, in collaboration with the French Development Agency (AFD), European Union and NIUA, launched the initiative – City Investments to Innovate, Integrate and Sustain (CITIIS) as an Urban Innovation mechanism. The program has developed project management tools and frameworks across the urban sector, including environmental and social safeguards. Leaders in Climate Change Management (LCCM) is connected to the CITIIS program. The first cohort of the LCCM program will have participants from the 12 cities getting assistance under the CITIIS program. LCCM will become an integral part of CITIIS 2.0, as it will act as a capacity-building arm.”

V Manjula, Additional Chief Secretary, Government of Karnataka and DG, ATI Mysuru, said, “As a premier training institution in Karnataka, with an established center for sustainable development goals, we find resonance in this program. We intend to leverage this collaboration and the experience gained in the process as a springboard for launching an extensive state level training partner program in LCCM, and to emerge as a center of excellence at the national level for LCCM.” Hitesh Vaidya, Director, National Institute of Urban Affairs, said, “Given the rate of investments towards urban sectors in India, for example \$30 billion for the smart cities program, the need for incorporating climate action within existing and future investments towards physical, social, and environmental services is paramount to ensure sustainable development. Through LCCM, the National Institute of Urban Affairs will be working toward its goal of building capacities and knowledge dissemination on dynamic discourse of urban issues, with reference to the climate change issues.” Dr OP Agarwal, CEO, WRI India, presenting the LCCM program, its structure and its aim to upskill urban climate leadership in India, said, “The key challenge in building capacity for mid-career professionals is using the right kind of pedagogy – a teaching style that encourages learning by doing, rather than by just listening to lectures. The LCCM has fully recognized this and adopted this kind of teaching style.” The launch event was followed by a half-day workshop addressed by



Mr Hitesh Vaidya, director, NIUA, who spoke about the role of the institution in anchoring capacity building training in the urban sector. A panel discussion on the Capacities for Climate Leadership in Indian Cities was joined by industry experts including Dr B R Mamatha, Jt Director-General, ATI, Mysuru; Mr Hitesh Vaidya, Director, NIUA; Mr Atul Bagai, Country Head, United Nations Environment Program, India; Mr Anshu Bharadwaj, CEO, Shakti Sustainable Energy Foundation; Dr Sanjeev Chadha, Professor and Head, Urban Development Center and Leadership Development Center, Mahatma Gandhi State Institute of Public Administration; and Ms Rejeet Mathews, Program Director, Urban Development, WRI India.

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## **Punjab Crackdowns on Illegal Bricks Retailers, Registration/renewal to Be Made Digital**

The Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Minister Lal Chand Kataruchak today ordered a crackdown on unlicensed retailers selling bricks in the state. He also ordered the introduction of an online registration system for the renewal of brick licences. Disclosing this, a spokesperson of the Punjab Government said that the Minister today met a delegation of brick kiln owners who apprised them of all the problems being faced by them in running their business. The main grouse of the delegation was that a large number of unauthorised shops are operating at many places in the border districts and these are actively engaged in selling bricks of poor quality at cheap rates, which is adversely affecting the normal business of the brick kilns who are doing their business with dedication. Appreciating the concerns of the delegation, the Minister ordered a crackdown on all unlicensed shops operating in the state and directed the department to enforce these directions within the next two weeks. The spokesperson added that the Minister directed the department to simplify the procedure for renewal of brick kiln licences by allowing the owners to apply for a consolidated licence of five years, which is expected to come as a major relief to the industry which at present does the rounds of offices every year for renewal. Appreciating the concerns of the industry regarding the irregular supply of coal the Minister assured that he would take up the matter with the Department of Industries to ensure that there is no shortage of coal in the state. The Minister also assured that the demand of the brick industry to use paddy stubble as fuel would be taken up with PPCB for early resolution.

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## **Punjab to Provide On-spot Wheat Subsidy to Farmers at the Time of Purchase**

The Punjab government has decided to provide quality wheat seeds to the farmers of the state. The Agriculture Minister Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal today held a meeting with

the Agriculture Department and PUNSEED officials to review the preparations made by the Department of Agriculture and PUNSEED to provide quality wheat seed to the farmers during the upcoming season. Chairman PUNSEED Mohinder Singh Sidhu and Additional Chief Secretary of Agriculture Department Sarvjit Singh were also present in the meeting. Agriculture Minister Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal, said after the meeting, that to provide big relief to the farmers, a major decision to change the old system of providing subsidies on wheat seeds was taken during the meeting. The Agriculture Minister said that from now onward the benefit of the subsidy on wheat seed by the Punjab government will be given to the farmers on the spot at the time of purchase of seed by reducing the price. He said that earlier in order to get the benefit of the subsidy on wheat seed, the farmers had to go through a long process as they had to register online after getting verification from the Lambardar/Sarpanch. The Agriculture Minister said that in order to relieve the farmers from unnecessary paperwork and the online system, the Bhagwant Maan government has provided this relief to the farmers. On this occasion, Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal issued directions to PUNSEED officials to liaise with the National Seed Corporation to purchase quality wheat seeds and provide them to the farmers. He also reprimanded the private seed sellers and said that the Punjab Government will not compromise on the quality of the wheat seed and only quality seed will be allowed to be sold in the market. He also said that if anyone tries to sell substandard seeds to the farmers, strict action will be taken by the government.

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## **Centre Working on Replacing Toll Plazas with Automatic Number Plate Recognition System**

Union minister Nitin Gadkari on Tuesday said that the government is conducting a pilot project to replace toll plazas with automatic number plate recognition system. Under this system, vehicle owners would not need to stop at toll plazas, as the fee would be deducted from their bank accounts. "The ministry of road transport and highways is conducting a pilot project of automatic number plate recognition system (Automatic Number Plate Reader cameras) to enable automated toll collection without stopping the vehicles," he said. With this new technology, the government wants to achieve two objectives—free flow of traffic on toll booths and pay as per your use, the road transport and highways minister said. Gadkari also said that the government wants to develop India's public transport system on electricity. Addressing an event, Gadkari said that after the introduction of FASTags, toll income of state-owned National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) increased by Rs 15,000 crore per year. During 2018-19, the average waiting time for vehicles at toll plazas was eight minutes. With the introduction of FASTags during 2020-21 and 2021-22, the average waiting time for vehicles has now come down to 47 seconds. Last month, Gadkari said that the government is exploring two options — a satellite-based toll system with a GPS in cars so that the toll directly gets subtracted from the

passenger's bank account and the other option, which is number plates. "We will select the technology. Though we have not taken an official decision, in my view, on the number plate technology there will be no toll plaza and there will be a sophisticated computerised digital system. There will be no queues and people will get great relief," the minister had said.

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## **India Launches "Innovation Roadmap of the Mission Integrated Biorefineries"**

India has announced the launch of the "Innovation Roadmap of the Mission Integrated Biorefineries" developed by co-leads and active inputs from Brazil, Canada, EC and the UK at the Global Clean Energy Action Forum-2022 at Pittsburgh, in the United States. Dr Jitendra Singh stated that the Mission is aimed at greater international collaboration and the need for increased financing for Energy Research, Development, and Demonstration (RD&D) during the next five years through public-private investment. He is leading a high-level Joint Indian Ministerial Delegation of Ministry of Power, New & Renewable Energy and Ministry of Science & Technology at Global Clean Energy Action Forum at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in the United States. The objective is to kickstart and unleash a virtuous cycle of public and private investment under the mission. Dr Jitendra Singh was speaking at the 1st Roundtable on "Sustainable Bioenergy and Bio-refineries" at the Global Clean Energy Action Forum – the joint convening of 7th Mission Innovation and 13th Clean Energy Ministerial -2022, said, "Innovation Roadmap of the Mission Integrated Biorefineries aims to fill the void by identifying gaps and challenges in current biorefining value chains, prioritising eight key actions to support the Mission, and guiding the Mission's overall path in achieving its goal". Addressing the Ministers & CEOs, Senior representatives of (US DoE, Mission Innovation Steering Committee (MISC) and Mission Innovation Secretariat, Senior representatives from MI Member countries and partner organisations, Dr Jitendra Singh said, Clean Energy Meet offers India an opportunity to present Prime Minister Narendra Modi's climate and clean energy vision before the world. The Minister said, he is extremely happy to be present at this meet, where the global energy community has come together to share and collaborate towards a successful global green transition.

He informed the Delegates that India is continually working towards transforming the energy landscape of country with significant clean energy share and added that by 2030, India agreed to reach 500-Gigawatt non-fossil energy capacity, shift 50% of energy requirements to renewable energy, lower overall anticipated carbon emissions by one billion tons, reduce carbon intensity of the economy by 45% over 2005 levels, and achieve net zero emissions by 2070. Dr Jitendra Singh shared with pride that a pilot plant of 10 Tons/day capacity plant with integrated enzyme production is being set up at Panipat Haryana, which will be commissioned by

December 2022. This will be the 1st indigenous technology for on-site enzyme production. The Minister pointed out that Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) has also planned to supply this indigenous enzyme to commercial 2G ethanol plant of 100 KL/day expected to be commissioned by Q2 of 2024. Further, lignin valorization process is also being developed to produce value added products from waste lignin. He said, it's successful demonstration will give an indigenous technology to the nation and will contribute to Self-Reliant India and reduce carbon foot print from transport sector. Dr Jitendra Singh underlined that sustainable biofuels play key role to reduce Green House Gas (GHG) emissions from the transport sector. He said, India, through the Department of Biotechnology, has been supporting R&D innovations in Advanced Biofuels and Waste to Energy technologies. He also shared with Delegates that India has established 5 Bioenergy Centers, where interdisciplinary team is working on advance sustainable biofuels using modern biotechnology tools. The Minister concluded by saying that recently, when India hosted the MI Annual Gathering in New Delhi, the Mission Integrated Biorefineries was launched with co-leads from the Netherlands, uniting key members, international organisations, the corporate sector, academic institutions, and civil society to accelerate innovation for renewable fuels, chemicals, and materials for a low-carbon future.

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## **Automatic Number Plate Recognition Cameras to Monitor & Improve Traffic in Bangalore**

Leveraging technology to effectively manage the traffic in the city, the Bangalore Traffic Police has deployed Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras which can help identify offenders even in dense traffic. The police deployed the first ANPR in the previous week. As a result, the camera has already identified 25 vehicles with pending cases for traffic rules violations and recovered fines worth ₹19,900. The ANPR cameras have been deployed at Cubbon Road, High Grounds, Balekundri Junction and more. The specialised cameras take pictures of the offenders and share the details identified with the nearest police station. Following the transfer of the details, the respective officer on the receiving end can launch an action to stop the vehicle and collects the fine. Moreover, the cameras offer a feature that enables the force to calibrate the devices to read specific numbers, like the numbers assigned specifically to two-wheelers or cars or commercial vehicles, etc. As of now, the Bangalore Traffic Police has procured has purchased 2028 body-worn cameras, 250 ANPR cameras and 80 red-light violation detection (RLVD) cameras. The police is also in the process of purchasing more cameras.

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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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## **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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## **Haryana CM's New Initiative to Promote Natural Farming**

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal has taken another initiative in the direction of making India self-reliant, as per Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision to promote natural farming in the state, by announcing subsidy of up to Rs 25,000 on the purchase of indigenous cows and providing four big drums to farmers to prepare the solution of Jeevamrut for natural farming, free of cost. Haryana will be the first state in the country to do so. The chief minister said that the basic objective of natural farming is to change eating habits, and for this we have to adopt the concept of food and medicine. Natural farming is the only way out. A target has been set to promote natural farming on 50,000 acres of land in the state. An exhibition of natural farming will be done in every block in order to make people aware about it. The chief minister was speaking as the chief guest at the state level review meeting on natural farming, organised at Dr Mangal Sain Auditorium Hall in Karnal on Monday. He interacted directly with agriculture experts and gave tips on increasing natural farming. He said that farmers having 2 to 5 acres of land registered on the portal, and who voluntarily adopt natural farming, will be provided 50 per cent subsidy for purchasing indigenous cows. The chief minister, while addressing the technical assistant managers, block technical assistant managers and the farmers associated with the Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) of the Central government, said that Atma Yojana of agriculture department will fix the poisonous food grains being produced in the fields due to indiscriminate use of chemical fertilisers. He said that Sikkim is the first state in the country which has moved completely to natural farming and work is also being done in Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. Now, the Haryana government will take a new initiative to give subsidies on the purchase of indigenous cows.

The chief minister said that he is glad that farmers are now understanding natural farming and so far, 1,253 farmers of the state have registered themselves voluntarily for adopting natural farming, on the portal created by the Agriculture Department. He

said that there was a time when there was a shortage of food grains in the country in the 1960s. For this, a call for Green Revolution was given, due to which there was indiscriminate use of chemical fertilisers and there was no shortage of foodgrains in the country. Now, due to the use of chemical fertilisers, the fields have become poisonous and the production of foodgrains has also become poisonous. "We should take a pledge that we will neither sow poison nor eat poison," he said. The chief minister said that "if we get sick, then we go to get medicine and now, natural farming is with us as an alternative to medicine. We have to adopt it as a part of our lives." Directly interacting with ATMs and BTMs, it came to the notice of the chief minister that monthly honorarium has not been received for the last 6-7 months and he directed the Additional Chief Secretary of the finance department over the phone to release the honorarium with immediate effect. In a direct interaction during the programme, the chief minister said that a portal will be made for the farmers to set up a demonstration plant of natural farming. Along with complete information about the land, farmers will also get information on adopting crop diversification on the portal. Apart from this, it will also give information about growing pulses. In this way, if the department has complete information, then monitoring can be done easily. The chief minister said that training should be given to farmers in small groups so that they can get information on crop production in a better way. Such a scheme will also be prepared so that the customers in the market do not have doubts about whether it is a product of natural farming or not.

The chief minister said that a demonstration plant must be made in every block so that the farmers can easily take advantage of it. More than 50 progressive farmers shall be trained at the block level. In this way, more progressive farmers can be prepared across the state. He said that progressive farmers will now be called natural farmers because natural farming has to be done according to the laws of nature, from which we had turned away in the past. He lauded the Gujarat Governor, Acharya Devvrat, who presented the draft of natural farming to the Prime Minister, and provided land for the Natural Farming Training Institute at Gurukul Kurukshetra. So far, 232 ATMs, BTMs and farmers have received training in natural farming. Haryana Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister Jai Parkash Dalal in his address said that the chief minister always thinks about the interests of farmers. He said that by adopting natural methods, the income of the farmers will increase. He further said that the government has implemented schemes like Mera Pani-Meri Virasat to save water and Bhavantar Bharpayee for farmers to get full price for their produce. Rs. 450 crore has been given to the farmers under this scheme. A provision has also been made to give an incentive amount of Rs. 6,000 per acre to reduce the sowing of paddy crop. Indri MLA Ramkumar Kashyap, Gharaunda MLA Harvinder Kalyan, Mayor Renu Bala Gupta, Deputy Commissioner Anish Yadav, along with senior officers and officials were also present on the occasion.

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## Central-West Asia

### **AZERBAIJAN: Cooperation to Create Stable Cosmic Ecosystem in Region - Voyager Space**

Cooperation with Azerbaijan will allow Voyager Space American aerospace company to create a stable cosmic ecosystem in the region, Chief Revenue Officer of Voyager Space Clay Mowry said, Trend reports via Minister of Digital Development and Transport of Azerbaijan. According to him, the company is opening doors for developing space countries in order to engage in research and science. "Space technologies and science have the potential to change society," Mowry added. In his turn, Chairman of the Board at Azercosmos national space agency Samaddin Asadov stressed that partnership with Voyager Space will allow expanding cosmic programs and technology in the country. "Strengthening of local space ecosystem with global partners such as Voyager Space is one of the main goals of Azerbaijan," he said. Azercosmos OJSC and Voyager Space signed a memorandum of understanding within the framework of the 73rd International Astronautical Congress in Paris. In accordance with the reached agreement, the Parties aim to develop cooperation in the areas of space infrastructure, the creation of scientific centers, research programs, the development of technologies and innovations, as well as the exchange of experience in various areas.

From <https://en.trend.az> 09/22/2022

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### **KAZAKHSTAN: Name of Capital City Changed Back**

The Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan has approved the change of the capital's name from Nur-Sultan back to Astana, Trend reports. The corresponding additions to the Constitution have been adopted by the MPs of Kazakhstan. Renaming the capital has been widely discussed by society, during meetings, and in citizens' appeals during the referendum for a long time. Therefore, the relevant proposal of the MPs was included in the draft law given public opinion. The initiative to restore the former name of the capital was put forward by the 'Zhana Kazakhstan' ('New Kazakhstan') deputy group.

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## Oceania

### **AUSTRALIA: Forced to Review Regulations Following Optus Cyber-Attack**

After hackers targeted Optus, the country's second-largest telecoms firm, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said the country will change privacy rules to force

companies that experience cyber-attacks to quickly notify banks. Last week, Optus, which is owned by Singapore Telecoms Ltd, said the home addresses, drivers' licences and passport numbers of up to 10 million customers, or some 40 percent of Australians, were compromised. The company did not reveal how its security was breached, but said the attacker's IP address, or unique identifier of a computer, appeared to move between countries in Europe. Australian media reported an unidentified party demanded a ransom of \$1 million in cryptocurrency in an online forum. Albanese stressed that the incident was "a huge wake-up call," adding that some states and criminal groups wanted to access people's data.

In an interview with radio station 4BC, Albanese said, "We want to make sure that we change some of the privacy provisions there so that if people are caught up like this, the banks can know, so that they can protect their customers, as well." Cybersecurity Minister Clare O'Neil said Optus was responsible for the breach, telling parliament, "One significant question is whether the cyber security requirements that we place on large telecommunications providers in this country are fit for purpose." Optus said it would offer the most affected customers free credit monitoring and identity protection with credit agency Equifax for one year, but it did not confirm how many customers will be offered this benefit. To fortify its cyber defenses, in 2020 Australia said it would spend \$1.1 billion over the next decade.

From <https://www.australianherald.com> 09/29/2022

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## **NEW ZEALAND: Govt Backs Scheme to Increase Tourism Workforce**

The Government will invest \$2 million to support Go with Tourism, an initiative that connects jobseekers with employers, to help address the workforce shortage in the industry and accelerate economic recovery, Tourism Minister Stuart Nash announced today. Go with Tourism is a unique approach to addressing labour supply issues in the tourism and hospitality sector that holds career expos and secondary-school education programmes across the country, promoting careers in the industry. "Our tourism operators have been hit particularly hard by COVID-19 but visitor data shows that the recovery is well underway. With our borders fully open, we're expecting to see far more international visitors on our shores than the previous two summers, which also enables a quicker economic recovery" Stuart Nash said.

"This increase in visitors will put extra pressure on tourism and hospitality workers to deliver a world-class experience, so today's extra funding to Go with Tourism is one of many ways our Government is supporting the sector through this time. Through expos, education, and free tools for job searching, the initiative has successfully brought a better awareness of a career in tourism to thousands of jobseekers across the country. "Like any industry, success depends on those working within it. This means investing in our people and deepening the talent pool. This investment will be

vital in building the tourism workforce back up, and is the latest addition to a suite of measures our Government has introduced to support the tourism sector over the past two years.

“Government support includes the \$400m Tourism Recovery Package, the \$200m Tourism Communities Plan, and the \$54m Innovation Programme for Tourism Recovery. This funding went to tourism operators most affected by the border closure, and has helped them to gear up for the return of international visitors,” Stuart Nash said. Notes :Launched in Auckland in 2019, Go with Tourism is a Government-supported initiative that aims to build the tourism and hospitality workforce. Funding from the International Visitor Conservation and Tourism Levy enabled the programme to be expanded nationwide In 2022 the initiative held seven expos – Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin, Hamilton, Palmerston North, Napier and Auckland – which attracted a record 28,667 visitors, beating the previous record 16,500 visitors in 2021. The Government’s Tourism Snapshot was released today, which highlights some of the current projects underway to transition towards a regenerative tourism model.

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 09/02/2022

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## **Government Backs Largest Ever Pastoral Farming Study on Regenerative Farming Practices**

New Zealand’s largest ever study on the sustainability of our farming sector aims to prove to the world why New Zealand food and fibre should be always the number one choice, Agriculture Minister Damien O’Connor announced. “The Government is backing a new \$26.1 million programme to undertake the most comprehensive study of pastoral farming in New Zealand,” Damien O’Connor said. “New Zealand’s economic security depends on our primary sector, which this year earned us a record \$53.3 billion in exports. Our future competitive edge in food and fibre will depend on demonstrating our sustainability credentials to ever more discerning consumers. “The new Whenua Haumanu programme will study the whole pastoral farming system from field to fork. “It will scientifically build a picture that includes soil biodiversity, pasture performance, animal production and welfare, and the quality of the food produced.”

Whenua Haumanu is being led by Massey University’s School of Agriculture and Environment to enable farmers to make informed decisions on the financial and environmental benefits of adopting regenerative farming practices. “We’re committing \$17.6 million over seven years through the Ministry for Primary Industries’ Sustainable Food and Fibre Futures (SFF Futures) to fund this partnership,” Damien O’Connor said. The programme will involve several research sites and bring together universities, Crown research institutes, and industry groups. Research partners include AgResearch, Lincoln University, and Dairy Trust Taranaki. Additional

guidance will be provided by an End User Advisory Group comprised of the pastoral industry, iwi, investment and consumer groups. “This is the most comprehensive study ever undertaken of our pastoral systems, both conventional and those incorporating regenerative farming practices,” Damien O’Connor said.

“Whenua Haumanu will be part of broader coordinated work that the Government is backing to provide a robust evidence base to explore regenerative farming practices alongside conventional pastoral practices in both dairy cow (cattle) and sheep systems. In doing so it will also test claims that many of our conventional pastoral practices are already regenerative. “One key aim of the programme is to investigate potential benefits of diverse pastures for grazing animals, as well as regenerative farming practices, as these have yet to be thoroughly studied for the New Zealand farming context.” Damien O’Connor said establishing an evidence base of regenerative practices is a cornerstone of the sustainability goal in the Government and food and fibre sector’s Fit for a Better World roadmap.

“Through SFF Futures we are co-investing with others in 11 research projects across the country that are evaluating regenerative farming practices. These amount to a total investment of \$54.74 million from Government and investment partners, and further research proposals are being assessed by the Ministry for Primary Industries. “Developing a sound evidence base for what works well with our soils, climates, and farming systems will aid our efforts to transition to a more sustainable future for our food and fibre sector. “Purchasing decisions by consumers in our export markets are increasingly being driven by their values. The work by Whenua Haumanu will help New Zealand tell the story of its food production so we can grow exports and deliver economic security,” Damien O’Connor said.

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## **New Programme to ‘Step Up’ Marine Reserve Monitoring Nationwide**

A new monitoring programme for marine reserves, coupled with a network of marine reserve rangers, will boost protection for the country’s special marine areas, Conservation Minister Poto Williams says. The Minister has announced the new Marine Monitoring and Reporting Framework today, as Conservation Week began. The framework, developed by the Department of Conservation, is a comprehensive plan for the management of marine reserves. “This is the first time a nationally coordinated monitoring system will be in place and will allow results across marine reserves to be directly compared,” Poto Williams says. The monitoring will allow drivers of biodiversity loss to be investigated such as habitat health, climate change effects, key species, compliance, water quality, invasive species, and pollution, depending on the aspirations of mana whenua and communities.

“In some places, we may be more interested in knowing how the populations of kōura or blue cod are faring,” Minister Williams says. “In other areas it might be more important to see how habitats like kelp forests or sponge gardens are responding to climate change and more acidic seawater.” This framework has an innovative and flexible design which builds upon historic monitoring methods, includes mātauranga, and incorporates new and emergent approaches to monitoring. In addition to the new framework, 13 marine reserve rangers have been employed to care for 26 mainland marine reserves across the country. “Their roles are a mixture of compliance, scientific monitoring, and working with local communities,” Poto Williams says. This work is being delivered as part of the Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy, which is focused on helping ecosystems and indigenous species thrive. Around 50% of our marine flora and fauna are found nowhere else on earth.

“People can help protect our marine species this Conservation Week (5-11 September 2022) by being a marine scientist at home through citizen science projects such as Spyfish Aotearoa. “Volunteers can help with tasks that are too big for researchers to do alone, such as identifying species in videos and measuring species in photos,” Minister Williams says. The theme for this Conservation Week (5-11 September) is “take a moment to act for nature”. “Even small actions can make a difference, such as picking up rubbish, volunteering or attending a Conservation Week event. Taking action not only benefits nature, but also makes us feel great.”

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## **Government Invests in Local Infrastructure to Support Decarbonisation**

Communities around New Zealand will benefit from upgraded, safer, and more people-friendly streets as the result of the Government’s Streets for People programme, Transport Minister Michael Wood announced today. “The Government is upgrading New Zealand’s transport infrastructure system to make it safer, greener, and more efficient for now and future generations to come,” Michael Wood said. “To support more climate friendly transport choices, Waka Kotahi has today released details on the successful applications from 13 local authorities for accelerated street change projects to be funded through the \$30m Streets for People programme. “Our Government’s commitment to infrastructure investment continues to play a critical part in securing New Zealand’s economy and supporting communities to thrive. “Delivering on projects such as these helps address our current infrastructure deficit while also meeting future needs caused by population growth and climate change.

“We’re committed to making it safer, quicker and more attractive for people to use public transport, walk, scoot and ride bikes in urban centres right across Aotearoa New Zealand,” Michael Wood said. “People want to be able to live and work in communities with modernised transport options. The Streets for People programme

aims to make it easier and faster for councils to partner with communities to upgrade their streets in this way. “In Gisborne, Grey Street will be reinvigorated to create a linear park between the CBD to the I-site, skate park and pump track. The linear park will also serve as a multi-purpose site for community and cultural events. “In Whanganui, the Saint Hill St bus hub refresh will the area, improve access for those using public transport as well as improving the area for cyclists and pedestrians. “Ensuring we have updated and easy to use infrastructure is great news for families, schools and communities, and for the environment, with fewer vehicle emissions and more vibrant, community focused places.

“Through our Transport Choices package in Budget 22, we are helping to improve transport options by funding the rapid roll-out of at least 100 km of safe urban cycleways to build more connected networks at pace; create significant safety improvements in around 25 pedestrian areas, and support safer, greener, and healthier travel to 75-100 schools. The package is also investing in improvements to public transport infrastructure. “The Streets for People programme supports this investment and will also help New Zealand meet our emissions reduction targets and improve health and wellbeing,” Michael Wood said.

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## **Govt Supports 50,000 Apprentices to Stay in Trades and Training**

The Government’s Apprenticeship Boost programme has reached a significant milestone, supporting over 50,000 apprentices to move into or retain their trade, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, Minister of Education Chris Hipkins and Minister for Social Development and Employment Carmel Sepuloni announced today. “Our Government have been deliberate in our approach to supporting people into jobs or on pathways into education and training. The fact that unemployment is at a near record low, and with economic activity continuing to grow, it’s clear that our plan is working,” Jacinda Ardern said. “Labour has backed apprentices and has been single minded in our focus of keeping New Zealanders in work and training during the COVID-19 economic shock. “We knew that in the wake of the Global Financial Crisis, under National apprentice enrolments plummeted. In contrast under this Government, including through the pandemic, we’ve overseen a significant increase.

“We’ve taken every opportunity to make investments that secure both our recovery from COVID-19 and our future, while also responding to the most pressing issues facing many New Zealanders. “Two years ago I launched our Apprenticeship Boost package alongside Ministers’ Hipkins and Sepuloni, and two years on, it’s heartening to see the impact Apprenticeship Boost has had in helping deliver key infrastructure projects and bolstering our construction workforce,” “Programmes like Apprenticeship Boost, Mana in Mahi, He Poutama Rangatahi and Māori Trades and Training have all been pivotal in keeping people in jobs and supporting employers to

invest in jobseekers. These investments continue to be key to unlocking the potential of Kiwis, the workforce and our economy,” Jacinda Ardern said. “Apprenticeships has been a top priority for our Government as we get Kiwis work-ready, plug skills shortages and meet the needs of industries,” Minister of Education Chris Hipkins said.

“50,000 apprentices supported through Apprenticeship Boost is further proof of the record numbers of apprentices who are already learning their trade whilst working on the job. This shows that our education, employment and training system is in a good position, supported by programmes like Apprenticeship Boost,” Chris Hipkins said. “We’ve purposefully set out to increase the number of apprentices as a way to support businesses to keep and increase their apprentice numbers, fill skill shortages and retrain those who lost work as a result of COVID-19. “Our focus is also on the long-term sustainability of the workforce and understanding what training is needed to meet the workforce’s needs. That’s why we’ve funded the Building and Construction Industry Training Organisation to develop a forecasting tool that displays national and regional skills gaps and surpluses within the construction and infrastructure labour market.

“Apprenticeship Boost is a cornerstone of the Government’s Apprenticeship Support Programme as we deliver key infrastructure projects, increase our housing stock and supply, and build the workforce needed to take us forward with our recovery” Chris Hipkins said. Social Development and Employment Minister Carmel Sepuloni said she’s pleased that Apprenticeship Boost, administered by the Ministry for Social Development, is supporting employers and keeping Kiwis working. “Apprenticeship Boost is continuing to help keep our economy ticking by keeping apprentices connected to work, training and their communities. The support provided through the scheme is critical to ensuring that our people and businesses develop the skills needed for our economic recovery and rebuild. “Over 113,000 people exited benefit to go into work over the last 12 months, which is a reflection of the suite of employment products and training programmes that we’ve got in place.

“A highlight of the scheme is the 19 percent of Māori apprentices who are participating, and who make up 17 percent of the overall population. With Māori unemployment at 5.5 percent, the lowest since records began, our focus on providing targeted and wrap-around support is paying dividends. “Flexi-wage has also been pivotal in supporting job seekers who are disadvantaged in the labour market, and we’ve also now got in place seven Employment Action Plans to address barriers and challenges for groups that have experienced poorer employment outcomes in the past. “Ensuring all New Zealanders have the opportunity to earn and learn is not only good for them, their wellbeing and whānau, but it’s good for our country as a whole. We’ll continue to create and invest in these opportunities as we build a productive economy and secure our recovery from COVID-19,” Carmel Sepuloni said.

## 1.4 Million Hectares of Wilding Pine Control Work in Two Years

1.4 million hectares of native and productive land have been protected from wilding conifers in the past two years and hundreds of jobs created in the united efforts to stamp out the highly invasive weeds, Biosecurity Minister Damien O'Connor said. Speaking today at the 2022 Wilding Pine Conference in Blenheim, Damien O'Connor said there was a visible difference across the country from the work of hundreds of people to get the upper hand on wildings. "Analysis showed that left unchecked, wildings would cost the economy \$5.3 billion. We made the right call to front-foot the issue, announcing \$100 million of Jobs For Nature funding for a collective effort at the last conference in 2020," Damien O'Connor said. "The National Wilding Conifer Control Programme has since treated more than two thirds of the known infestations around the country at least once.

"From the dune lakes of the Te Aupōuri Peninsula in Northland, to the high country of Molesworth, and to the sacred Motupōhue Bluff Hill at Invercargill, the scenes are striking. Native tussock, bush and grazing land are recovering, and the outlook for biodiversity is brighter. "The Programme has now completed two phases of control across 33 percent of the national known infestation, and a first phase over another 37 percent. "That means the spread has been stopped or slowed in these areas, and efforts can shift to stopping re-infestation over the next few years – which is progressively less costly." A 2018 Cost Benefit Analysis report showed that if the Programme focussed control efforts on 1.8 million hectares of the most vulnerable landscapes, this could protect 7.25 million hectares from further infestation. The Programme is on track to exceed this target.

"The control of wilding pines delivers huge benefits for New Zealand's economy and rural communities and supports resilience to the impacts of climate change – through reducing impacts on productive land, hydro-power generation, and reducing the threats from intense wildfires," Damien O'Connor said. "The Programme carried out searching, pulling, sawing, spraying and felling. Added to that is the work of iwi and community volunteers and Government agencies, along with landowners and foresters managing their own land responsibly and being good neighbours. "The final \$35 million of Jobs For Nature funding will be spent over the next two years to continue the highest priority control work. It will progressively transition cleared land back to landowners where it is feasible for them to take over ongoing management to prevent reinvasion.

"With the results of the control work clear to see and the broad economic benefits understood, I hope to work with organisations to ensure funding is in place to keep up the pace of this essential work. "The Programme, and many others under their



own steam, are doing an excellent job, and we need to keep working together to maintain all the ground we have gained so far – the battle against this urgent weed threat is far from won,” Damien O’Connor said. The government has committed ongoing baseline funding of \$10 million per year from the 2023-24 Financial Year.

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## **Government Enhances Protection for Our Most-Productive Land**

The Government has today released a National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land (NPS-HPL), which will enhance protection for our most productive land, providing security for both our domestic food supply and primary exports. “The National Policy Statement will greatly improve how we protect highly-productive land from inappropriate subdivision, use and development,” Environment Minister David Parker said. “We need to house our people and to feed them too. Our cities and towns need to grow but not at the expense of the land that’s best suited to grow our food.” “The NPS-HPL will help protect our best growing areas so Kiwis continue to have access to leafy greens and other healthy foods. “Councils will be required to identify, map and manage highly productive land to ensure it’s available for growing vegetables, fruit and other primary production, now and into the future.”

Agriculture and Trade Minister Damien O’Connor said highly productive land provides food for New Zealanders, significant economic and employment benefits to communities and underpins the value of New Zealand’s primary sector. “Our Fit for a Better World roadmap that we developed with the sector will add \$44 billion over 10 years to our primary sector exports, but is dependent on maintaining access to our highly productive soils,” Damien O’Connor said. “Today’s changes enhance protection for our highly productive land giving farmers, growers, and other food producers certainty into the future, and provide greater economic security for all New Zealanders. “Over the last 20 years, about 35,000 hectares of our highly productive land has been carved up for urban or rural residential development, while 170,000 hectares of this land has been converted to lifestyle blocks.

“Once land is built on, it can no longer be used to grow food and fibre. That’s why we are moving to protect our most fertile and versatile land, especially in our main food production areas like Auckland, Waikato, Hawke’s Bay, Horowhenua and Canterbury,” Damien O’Connor said. Associate Agriculture Minister Meka Whaitiri said the Government has worked closely with local authorities, industry, growers, and Māori organisations to develop a policy that is workable and fit-for-purpose. “This policy statement supports the sector by ensuring our best land will remain available for food and fibre production,” Meka Whaitiri said. The NPS-HPL sits alongside other national direction, including the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management and the National Policy Statement on Urban Development (NPS-UD).

The NPS-HPL will work in a complementary way with the NPS-UD. Urban intensification enabled under the NPS-UD will reduce the demand for outward urban growth on highly productive land. “This recognises that using land for primary production needs to occur within environmental limits, and ensures that all land can be used and managed to best effect,” David Parker said. “Councils, in limited circumstances, will still be able to rezone highly-productive land for urban housing if less productive land is not available, or if certain tests can be met. “However, the NPS-HPL will introduce strong restrictions on the use of highly productive land for new rural lifestyle developments.” The NPS-HPL will be transitioned into the two Acts replacing the Resource Management Act – the Spatial Planning Act (SPA) and the Natural and Built Environments Act (NBA). “The work that councils will be required to do under the NPS-HPL can be transitioned with ease into the new plans required under the SPA and NBA,” David Parker said.

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## **New Accreditation Builds Capacity for Emergency Management Volunteers**

Emergency Management Minister Kieran McNulty has recognised the first team to complete a newly launched National Accreditation Process for New Zealand Response Team (NZ-RT) volunteers. “NZ-RT volunteers play a crucial role in our emergency response system, supporting response and recovery efforts on the ground. This new accreditation makes sure our people are experienced, trained, and able to support local teams on the ground when needed,” said Minister McNulty. “This accreditation works towards making sure there is a consistently high standard of volunteer capability, and ensuring community is at the heart of the emergency management system, as well as recognising volunteers’ commitment to their communities. “I’m happy to have been able to meet and congratulate all members of NZ-RT 8 as the first team to complete the training to receive the new accreditation.

“NZ-RT volunteers are based across the country and are always ready to be deployed to work alongside local civil defence groups wherever and whenever there’s an emergency event. “I’d like to thank all NZ-RT volunteers for the commitment and time they give to keep our communities safe, and to especially thank and congratulate NZ-RT 8,” Minister McNulty said. NZ-RT 8 is the first of 21 teams to complete the National Accreditation Process so far. At least three other teams are working towards their accreditation and are expected to complete the process by the end of the year. The introduction of the National Accreditation Process has been a joint effort between NEMA, regional CDEM groups, and supporting agencies in response to recommendations from the 2018 review of the Emergency Management system.

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## **Government Backs Initiatives to Cut Environmental Impact of Plastic Waste**

The Government has today announced funding for projects that will cut plastic waste and reduce its impact on the environment. “Today I am announcing the first four investments to be made from the \$50 million Plastics Innovation Fund, which was set last year and implemented a 2020 election promise,” Environment Minister David Parker said. The projects are: Marley NZ, partnering with Waste Management and Unitec, to minimise construction waste by breaking down old plumbing pipes made of PVC and HDPE and using the material to make new pipes. A research and development project by Pinehurst Associates, in collaboration with Scion, to develop bio-degradable nursery pots as an alternative to traditional plastics pots. The pots would degrade once planted, to support plant growth.

A partnership with Policon to expand New Zealand’s onshore recycling capability, by turning waste polystyrene, such as you find in appliance packaging, into innovative building products. An initiative with Kaipaki Dairies that extends their reusable milk keg delivery service, removing up to a million single use plastic milk bottles per annum. Total funding for the four Plastics Innovation Fund projects amounts to \$5.57 million. “Together, these projects help to turn Kiwi innovation and imagination into reality, and change the way we make, use and dispose of plastics,” David Parker said. “We are also utilising funding from the Waste Minimisation Fund to help design a regulated plastic packaging product stewardship scheme for New Zealand. Once in place it will require producers, brand owners, importers, retailers and consumers to take responsibility for collecting and dealing with plastic packaging.”

An estimated 60 per cent of plastics imported into New Zealand is used by the packaging sector. The Government is providing \$994,900 to industry organisation The Packaging Forum to design a regulated plastic packaging product stewardship scheme over two years. The project will see representatives from across the plastic packaging chain come together to design a fit-for-purpose product stewardship scheme. The Packaging Forum and the NZ Food and Grocery Council will also contribute funding to the project, which will cost a total of \$1,361,000. “Together, these investment will help reduce the amount of plastic waste that gets into the environment and into landfill. They build on the decisive action the Government has already taken to tackle the problem of plastic pollution, including the ban on single-use plastic bags, polystyrene food and drink packaging and other single use plastic items,” David Parker said. “The actions our Government is taking move New Zealand closer to using plastic in ways that prevent harm to the environment.”

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## **Government Delivers ACC Change to Support 28,000 Parents**

Nearly 50 years since ACC legislation was first passed in the House and just less than a year after we announced our intention to introduce legislation, birthing parents who are injured during childbirth will be covered by ACC. “This is an incredibly important day for birthing parents, with the passage of this Bill representing a significant step towards improving gender balance, fairness and equity in the Accident Compensation Scheme,” Minister for ACC Carmel Sepuloni said. “On 28 September 2021, I announced that we would be amending ACC legislation to cover more injuries experienced by women during childbirth. Less than a year later, we’ve taken action to deliver a change that’ll benefit an estimated 28,000 birthing parents per year,” Carmel Sepuloni said. “This followed on from an article I read about the growing number of women experiencing injuries when giving birth, and their struggle for treatment. It was a distressing read, but I instantly knew that this was something that needed to change.

“More than 70 per cent of people giving birth in Aotearoa New Zealand may experience an injury during labour or birth. It’s fair that these injuries, some of which can be severe, are covered by ACC. “That’s why we’ve taken steps to ensure birth injuries are covered, making changes to the legislation and including a list of covered injuries. The list includes all injuries that result from the birthing process – from onset of labour through to the baby being delivered,” Carmel Sepuloni said. As is normal under ACC, follow-on injuries directly related to those listed will also be covered, including mental injuries caused by physical injuries. Other injuries which are caused by those listed will be covered by ACC, therefore birthing parents have no need to worry about further complications from a covered injury. As a commitment to providing comprehensive cover, the list of injuries will now be regularly reviewed after it is implemented to make sure no birthing parent is missing out.

Including cover for these injuries will mean birthing parents can access existing support and treatment available through the AC Scheme, including support for mental injuries that are caused by physical injuries. “The Select Committee’s consideration of the Bill has proved to be an invaluable step in this process and provided the opportunity for the list of additional injuries to be thoroughly tested,” Carmel Sepuloni said. “I want to thank the Committee and stakeholders for their extensive work, which has helped to ensure the list of injuries is comprehensive, and for all those who have submitted on the Maternal Birth Injury and Other Matters Bill – you have made the difference. “The Government is laying the foundations for a better future by improving equity and health outcomes for women through amending ACC legislation, including taking steps to modernise ACC and make support more accessible to New Zealanders who need it,” Carmel Sepuloni said.

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 09/27/2022

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**Extra Measures to Increase Census Turnout in 2023**

Major work to ensure the delivery of a successful census in 2023 is underway, after a low turnout in 2018 was caused by the previous Government's decision to move the 5 yearly survey to a mostly online approach. Statistics New Zealand announced today that the next census will be held on 7 March, 2023. "The 2023 Census will have more of everything – more boots on the ground, more paper forms, more hours worked and more community engagement," Statistics Minister David Clark said. "Census data is used to plan infrastructure like water and roads, to build and resource services such as hospitals and schools, to support community applications for funding, and in the setting of electoral boundaries, so it is critical we get it right." The previous National-led Government decided to shift the census to a mostly online survey and, at the same time, directed Stats NZ to cut costs over two census cycles. That resulted in a lower than usual coverage.

"In particular the 2018 Census did not achieve a comprehensive population coverage for Maori and Pacific peoples. "As a result we are doubling the number of census workers on the ground and increasing the number of paper forms that will be delivered. This will help to plug any gaps we experience from digital returns. "The 2018 Census was underfunded by the previous Government. Since then the Government has invested approximately \$110 million more into the census to ensure a successful result in 2023. "A big focus of the additional funding is investment in particular initiatives to raise response rates for population groups that have faced the most barriers, or have had the lowest response rates, historically," David Clark said. Associate Minister of Statistics Meka Whaitiri said a lot of work has gone into ensuring the nationwide survey will increase the response rate for Māori.

"Census data is used to make decisions about the planning, funding and delivery of services that impact Māori, whānau, hapū and iwi," Meka Whaitiri said. "One of the new initiatives for the 2023 Census includes Te Mana Whakatipu, a pilot to build iwi data analytical capability and to deliver iwi-led collections in two locations where response rates have been lower in the past. "Led by Te Kāhui Raraunga, the operating arm of the Data Iwi Leaders Group, 2023 Census data will be collected by iwi collectives in the Far North by Te Ōhua and on the East Cape – by Toitū Tairāwhiti. "I encourage all iwi groups to participate and promote Census 2023 to ensure the Government can meet iwi data needs. The aim is to increase response rates across the motu, ensuring the 2023 Census delivers quality data for Māori," Meka Whaitiri said.

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 09/28/2022

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## **Government Supports Local Innovation in Homelessness Prevention**

Government is stepping up its support of community leadership in homelessness

prevention with 10 new recipients of the Local Innovation and Partnership Fund (LIPF) confirmed today by Associate Minister of Housing (Homelessness), Marama Davidson. “I am thrilled to confirm close to \$6 million has been allocated to 10 initiatives as part of the Aotearoa New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan. (Successful initiatives are outlined below). “Supporting local leadership is essential for helping prevent and respond to homelessness in the community. Our local leaders have the knowledge and connections to bring about effective change that best meets the needs of their people and regions. “These 10 initiatives will have a strong focus on Māori, Pasifika and rangatahi as part of this Government’s commitment to supporting communities that are more likely to experience discrimination and isolation,” says Marama Davidson. “The standard of all applicants was extremely high, and I would like to mihi to all 38 applicants who submitted proposals for this important work. “I am also pleased to announce that round three of the Fund will open in the coming months and I encourage potential applicants to start considering projects for submission.” The \$16.6 million Local Innovation and Partnership Fund was set up in 2020 and is one of 18 actions set out in the Aotearoa/ New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan to support local initiatives that respond and prevent homelessness.

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 09/28/2022

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## **Government Strengthens Measures to Combat Migrant Worker Exploitation**

The Government has today introduced the Worker Protection (Migrant and Other Employees) Bill designed to protect migrant workers from exploitation, says Associate Minister for Workplace Relations and Safety Priyanca Radhakrishnan. “With our borders open once again, and near record low unemployment, migrant workers are returning to New Zealand, helping to grow our economy and bring new perspectives to our communities,” Priyanca Radhakrishnan said. “Protecting migrant workers from exploitation is a priority for the Government, and today’s announcement will take a comprehensive approach to stamping out migrant exploitation,” Priyanca Radhakrishnan said. “We need to ensure we educate migrant workers so that they know their rights, better protect those who have been exploited by providing further access to support, and hold exploitative employers to account.

“This Bill will strengthen current measures, and introduce new ones to crack down on employer non-compliance. “Introducing infringement offences will ensure that even lower-level offending such as refusing to provide employment documentation, are dealt with before it becomes more serious. “Those convicted of migrant exploitation will also be disqualified from managing or directing a company, with a public register naming those individuals.” The Government is building on the reporting and protection measures that were rolled out in 2021, by commencing a community-led education pilot and introducing worker protection legislation to the house today.

“Research released today shows that migrants most at risk of exploitation lack basic knowledge of their employment rights. We are making this information more accessible to migrant workers and those who employ them,” Priyanca Radhakrishnan said.

“Working with community and industry networks that already support migrant workers and employers of migrants is an obvious step we can take to bridge this education gap. The Worker Protection (Migrant and Other Employees) Bill will introduce the remaining changes from the Government’s Temporary Migrant Worker Exploitation Review completed in 2020, including establishing an infringement regime. This builds on the first tranche of changes that came into effect in July 2021 and included a dedicated 0800 number and reporting and triaging web form, the Migrant Exploitation Protection Visa which has seen over 119 visas granted in the year ending July 2022 to safeguard workers, and liaison support services for victims of migrant exploitation. “These initiatives have resulted in more people coming forward to report migrant exploitation with 956 reports between 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2022 – up from just 173 in the previous year,” Priyanca Radhakrishnan said.

“The Bill’s proposals also supplement the many improvements and initiatives the government has taken in recent years to improve migrant rights, whether it’s through the immigration rebalance or lifting wage requirements long term. “Just earlier this week the government announced sick leave provisions to be introduced to our RSE workers, in addition to minimum wage requirements introduced during the pandemic. But with a full review of the scheme under way, we know there is still more to do. “I encourage engagement with the Worker Protection (Migrant and Other Employees) Bill as it goes through the Select Committee process. We need to work collectively to stamp out migrant exploitation and ensure that those who come to New Zealand to work are treated fairly and with dignity,” Priyanca Radhakrishnan said.

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## 4、 Economic and Social Development and ICT

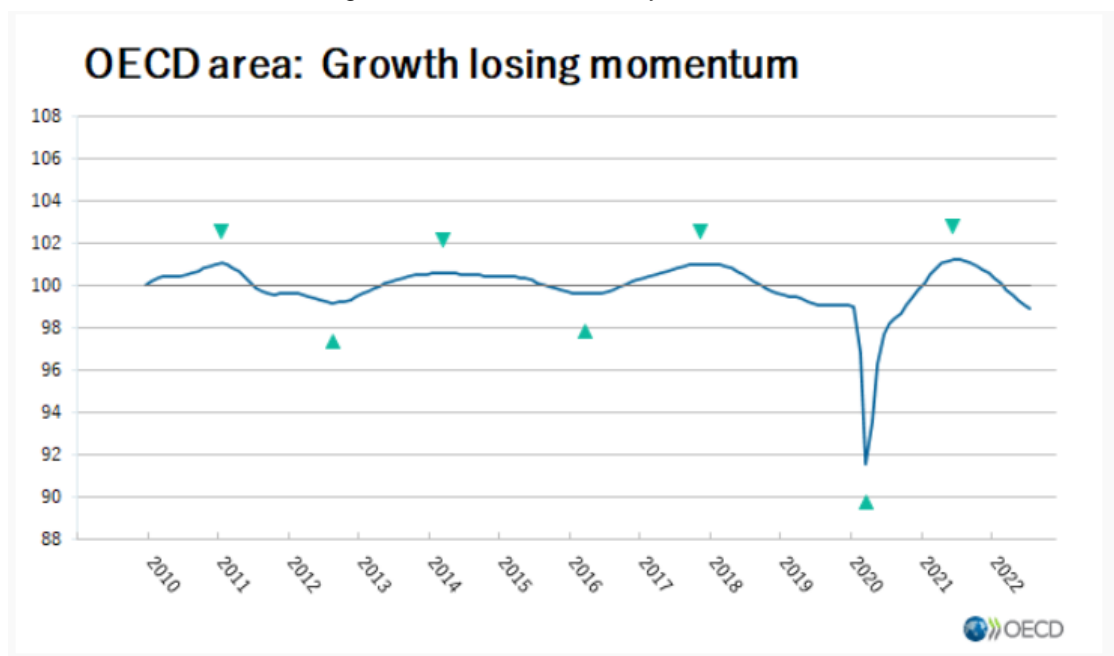
### Asia-Pacific

#### **Leading Indicators Continue to Point to Weakening Growth in Most Major Economies**

The OECD Composite Leading Indicators (CLIs), designed to anticipate turning points in economic activity over the next six to nine months, continue to signal a slowdown in most major economies and in the OECD area as a whole. Among large OECD economies, the CLIs continue to anticipate a loss of growth momentum in Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as in the euro area as a

whole including France, Germany and Italy. Stable growth continues to be expected in Japan. Among major emerging-market economies, the CLI for China (industrial sector) now points to a loss in growth momentum. In India, the CLI continues to indicate stable growth whereas in Brazil it signals growth losing momentum.

The OECD CLIs are cyclical indicators based on a range of forward-looking indicators such as order books, building permits, confidence indicators, long-term interest rates, new car registrations and many more. Most of these monthly indicators are available up to August 2022. In the face of persisting uncertainties related to the war in Ukraine, renewed COVID-19 threats, and the impact of high inflation on real household income, the CLI components might be subject to larger-than-usual fluctuations. As a result, the indicators should be interpreted with care and their magnitude be regarded as an indication of the strength of the signal rather than as a measure of growth in economic activity.



From <https://www.oecd.org/> 09/12/2022

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## OECD Interim Economic Outlook Warns of Pervasive Global Economic Slowdown

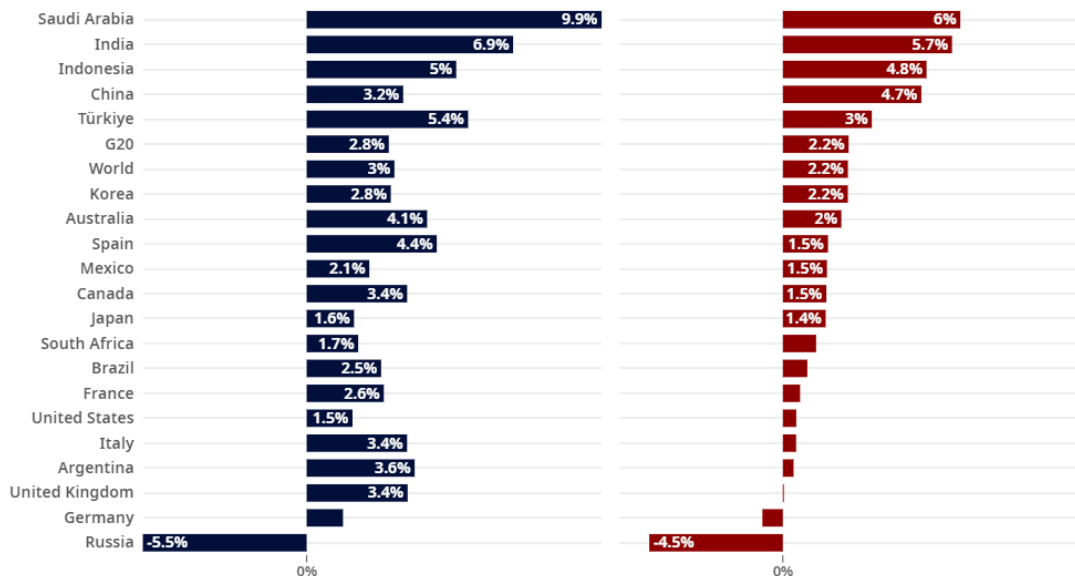
The global economy has lost momentum in the wake of Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine, which is dragging down growth and putting additional upward pressure on inflation worldwide, according to the OECD's latest Interim Economic Outlook. The Outlook projects global growth at a modest 3% this year before slowing further to just 2.2% in 2023. This is well below the pace of economic growth projected prior to the war and represents around USD 2.8 trillion in foregone global output in 2023. The war has further pushed up energy prices, especially in Europe, aggravating inflationary pressures at a time when the cost of living was already rising rapidly



around the world due to lingering impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. With businesses across many economies passing through higher energy, transportation and labour costs, inflation is reaching levels not seen since the 1980s, forcing central banks to rapidly tighten monetary policy settings faster than anticipated.

## Real GDP growth projections for 2022 and 2023

Year-over-year, %



Source: [OECD Economic Outlook, Interim Report September 2022](#)

The inflation and energy supply shock stemming from the war has led the OECD to revise its previous growth projections downward worldwide. Annual GDP growth is projected to slow to around 1/2% in the United States in 2023, and 1/4% in the euro area, with risks of deeper declines in several European economies during the winter months. Growth in China has also been hit and is expected to drop to a projected 3.2% in 2022. Except the 2020 pandemic, this will be the lowest growth rate in China since the 1970s. Inflation is projected to recede gradually through 2023 in most G20 countries as tighter monetary policy takes effect and global growth slows. Headline inflation is projected to ease from 8.2% this year to 6.6% in 2023 in the G20 economies, and fall from 6.2% this year to 4% in 2023 in the G20 advanced economies.

“The global economy has lost momentum in the wake of Russia’s unprovoked, unjustifiable and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine. GDP growth has stalled in many economies and economic indicators point to an extended slowdown,” OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann said during a presentation of the Outlook. “Inflationary pressures that were already present as the global economy emerged from the pandemic have been severely aggravated by the war. This has further driven rising energy and food prices that now threaten living standards for people

across the globe.” The OECD points to substantial uncertainty about the economic outlook, with significant downside risks. These include the possibility of further food and energy price spikes, which could push many people into poverty, as well as the possibility of gas shortages as winter progresses in the Northern hemisphere. Reducing energy consumption and diversifying supply sources will be critical to avoid shortages, which would push global energy prices up, damage confidence, and likely worsen financial conditions and require a temporary period of enforced reduction of gas use by businesses.

Taken together, these shocks could reduce growth in the European economies by over 1¼ percentage points in 2023, relative to the Outlook’s central projection, and raise inflation by over 1½ percentage points. This would push many countries into a full year recession in 2023, while GDP growth would also be weakened in 2024. Other key risks are that the ongoing adjustments in Chinese property markets - combined with the high level of corporate debt in China and continuation of the country’s “zero-Covid” policy - could generate a more severe slowdown in the world’s second largest economy than projected. This risk comes on top of continued costs from global supply chain pressures, and possible debt crises and financial contagion in many emerging-market and low-income economies.

Further monetary policy tightening will be needed in most major economies to ensure that inflation pressures are reduced durably. This will need to be calibrated carefully given uncertainty about the speed at which higher interest rates will take effect and spillovers from tightening in the rest of the world. Fiscal support can help cushion the impact of high energy costs on households and companies, but should be concentrated on aiding the most vulnerable and preserve incentives to reduce energy consumption. Fiscal actions to cushion living standards must avoid persistent stimulus at a time of high inflation. Means-tested transfers to households broadly meet this criteria.

Managing the energy crisis requires renewed efforts to secure alternative supplies while ensuring all sectors of the economy are incentivised to reduce demand. There is also an urgent need for governments to accelerate investment in energy security and invest in the green transition. For the full report and more information, visit the Economic Outlook online. Media queries should be directed to the OECD Media Office (+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/> 09/26/2022

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## **ADB Launches Program to Scale Up Investments in Air Quality Improvement**

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) today launched the Asia Clean Blue Skies Program (ACBSP) to scale up ADB's investments in improving air quality in Asia and the Pacific. Launched at the joint forum of the Fourth Asia Pacific Clean Air Partnership in the Republic of Korea, ACBSP will support the preparation and strengthening of policies and plans in ADB's developing member countries (DMCs) to stimulate investments in projects that benefit air quality such as greenhouse gas reduction in energy, agriculture, transport, industrial, and urban development, among other sectors. "Air pollution endangers not just public health, but also significantly threatens the environment, ecosystems, and food security of the region," said the Director General of ADB's Sustainable Development and Climate Change Department Bruno Carrasco. Through ACBSP, ADB will support the improvement of design and monitoring of projects in a way that boosts air quality in its DMCs.

ACBSP will be implemented from the fourth quarter of 2022 until 2030 and will leverage technical and financial resources of ADB and its partners to build the capacity of DMCs on the design and implementation of investment projects with air quality and low carbon benefits. The program will support DMCs in meeting their nationally determined contributions to achieve carbon neutrality and meet commitments under the Paris Agreement. ADB has financed more than \$2.5 billion in investments in air pollution reduction in the region in the past 8 years. All investment projects financed or administered by ADB that have environmental safeguard requirements are required to assess the air quality impacts of the projects and monitor air quality during project implementation. ADB aims to provide \$100 billion in cumulative climate finance to its DMCs from 2019 to 2030.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 09/07/2022

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## **Women's Economic Empowerment Boosts Sustainability**

Gender and economic and social development ministers and high-level representatives from APEC member economies are pushing for more progress on women and girls' economic empowerment, highlighting that it is important for sustainable recovery. Convening in Bangkok, members reiterated their commitment to pursue policies and initiatives that promote an inclusive, equitable and sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that contribute decisively to the advancement of gender equality and women's economic empowerment. "We underline the importance of embedding the empowerment and advancement of women and gender equality in the Asia-Pacific region in line with APEC's vision, roadmap, implementation plan and other relevant instruments agreed upon within the forum," said Chuti Krairiksh, Thailand's Minister of Social Development and Human Security.

At the 2022 APEC Women and the Economy Forum, Thailand's APEC sustainability priority took center stage as the forum explores how it can provide more opportunities for women and how they can contribute to sustainability, including

through the bio-circular-green (BCG) economy model. “All challenges should be and can be transformed into opportunities,” Minister Chuti added. “Gender perspectives must be mainstreamed into our respective policies, action plans and budgets.” “Importantly, all these policies, plans and budgets must be approved and implemented so that the needs of women and girls of diverse backgrounds will be addressed, and that women and girls will have equal opportunity and equitable access to capital and markets, labor force participation, leadership positions, education and digital skills training in a changing world,” Minister Chuti said.

Minister Chuti also reiterated that strengthening collaboration and networks are key to providing a supportive environment and that member economies need to create “an enabling environment that promotes inclusive development and empowerment for all women.” Former Thailand Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva addressed the forum on Wednesday, highlighting how women are the driver for the economy of Thailand and many economies across the Asia-Pacific, but they are still not fairly represented in key political roles. He also reiterated the importance of sex disaggregated data as member economies integrate women’s empowerment and new economic opportunities. “We need to do much more in terms of adopting policies that would support families,” said former Prime Minister Abhisit. “Women often have that difficult choice of advancing their career and balancing it with what they see as family duties, and that continues to be the greatest barrier to advancement,” he added. “Policies that encompass child benefits, paid or unpaid leave, and also getting men to do their share of responsibilities in unpaid and domestic work, in my view, should be prioritized.”

“When it comes to women, we are talking about roughly half the population, there is simply no excuse why this inequity or this dimension of unfairness should continue,” said former Prime Minister Abhisit. “Women deserve better, the Asia-Pacific region deserves better, and the world deserves better.” “As a forum, APEC is required by the Leaders, through the Aotearoa Plan of Action, to ensure that our growth is high quality and inclusive, brings palpable benefits and greater health and wellbeing to owners and employees of MSMEs, as well as women and others with untapped economic potential,” explained Dr Rebecca Sta Maria, Executive Director of the APEC Secretariat.

“At the individual economy level, we need to adopt and strengthen regulatory approaches, sound public sector governance, and take other measures that support economic inclusion and well-being,” Dr Sta Maria added. “While at the collective level we will build on APEC’s agenda on advancing economic, financial and social inclusion by advancing inclusive policies, gender equality and the economic empowerment of women, and building on APEC’s work on supporting women’s economic empowerment.” Dr Sta Maria echoed the need to have strong and reliable monitoring mechanisms to ensure that all plans and policies are implemented strategically across various sectors and levels. At the forum, ministers and senior

officials shared strategies and policies to strengthen women's economic empowerment, especially in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, and how to ensure women's well-being while building a more resilient future.

From <https://www.apec.org/> 09/08/2022

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## **225 Million Displacements in Asia and Pacific Due to Disasters, as Impact of Climate Change Deepens, Says New ADB Report**

People in Asia and the Pacific were displaced more than 225 million times due to disasters triggered by natural hazards from 2010 to 2021, accounting for more than three-quarters of the global number, according to a report released today by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). The report, *Disaster Displacement in Asia and the Pacific: A Business Case for Investment in Prevention and Solutions*, found East Asia and Southeast Asia had the highest number of disaster displacements—nearly two-thirds of Asia and the Pacific's total—followed closely by South Asia. It says the Pacific has the greatest displacement risk relative to its population size. "Disaster displacement is already eroding the development gains in Asia and the Pacific and threatens the long-term prosperity of the region," said ADB's Chief of Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management Thematic Group Noelle O'Brien. "We need to strengthen policies and action on disaster risk management to ensure the region doesn't regress on its development goals."

"Disasters are costing Asia and the Pacific hundreds of billions of dollars," said IDMC Director Alexandra Bilak. "However, the ultimate cost still lies in the millions of lives that are affected by unmitigated disaster displacement every year." The 225 million displacements in Asia and the Pacific include 5 million displacements by Cyclone Amphan across South Asia in 2020, 2.6 million displacements by the Gorka earthquake in Nepal in 2015, and 15.5 million displacements by floods in the People's Republic of China in 2010. It does not include the estimated hundreds of thousands of people displaced in Pakistan due to severe flooding since June. The report discusses the role of climate change in disaster displacement, noting that the effects of climate change are becoming visible, and are projected to increase displacement as the frequency and intensity of hazards changes and impacts on food insecurity and water scarcity. It also looks at the social and economic impacts and what steps are being taken to better prevent and prepare for disaster displacement.

It analyzes the impacts of floods, storms, earthquakes, tsunamis, and volcanic activity on each subregion in Asia and the Pacific, and how disaster displacement disproportionately affects vulnerable groups such as women, children, and the elderly. The report discusses the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction as a gauge on measures undertaken to address both natural and manmade hazards and

highlights the need for political, technical, and financial support in a regional concerted effort to reduce the impact of disasters on lives, livelihoods, and economies.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 09/19/2022

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## **ADB Lowers Developing Asia Growth Outlook as Global Risks Mount**

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) again lowered its forecasts for economic growth in developing Asia and the Pacific, amid mounting challenges that include increased monetary tightening by central banks, fallout from the protracted Russian invasion of Ukraine, and recurrent COVID-19 lockdowns in the People's Republic of China (PRC). The region's economy is expected to grow 4.3% this year, compared with the bank's projection in April of a [5.2% expansion](#), according to an update of the [Asian Development Outlook \(ADO\) 2022](#), released today. The growth forecast for next year has been lowered to 4.9% from 5.3%, while the region's inflation forecast has been raised. Excluding the PRC, the rest of developing Asia is projected to grow by 5.3% in both 2022 and 2023.

Domestic consumer spending and investment are driving growth as economies in the region continue to relax pandemic restrictions, thanks in part to vaccination drives and declining COVID-19 mortality. However, the continuing invasion of Ukraine has heightened global uncertainty, worsened supply disruptions, and unsettled energy and food markets. More aggressive monetary tightening by the US Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank is denting global demand and rattling financial markets. Meanwhile, sporadic COVID-19 outbreaks and new lockdowns have slowed growth in the PRC, the region's largest economy.

"Developing Asia continues to recover, but risks loom large," said ADB Chief Economist Albert Park. "A significant downturn in the world economy would severely undermine demand for the region's exports. Stronger-than-expected monetary tightening in advanced economies could lead to financial instability. And growth in the PRC faces challenges from recurrent lockdowns and a weak property sector. Governments in developing Asia need to remain vigilant against these risks and take the necessary steps to contain inflation without derailing growth." The world's major advanced economies are forecast to grow 1.9% in 2022 and 1.0% in 2023, slower than projected earlier this year. High inflation has prompted the US and the euro area to aggressively tighten monetary policy, weakening demand in these economies, which also continue to be affected by supply-chain disruptions and uncertainty from the invasion of Ukraine.

ADB raised its forecast for inflation in developing Asia this year to 4.5% from a previous projection of 3.7%. The forecast for next year is 4.0%, up from 3.1%. While

inflation in the region remains lower than elsewhere, supply disruptions continue to push up food and fuel prices. The PRC's growth outlook for this year was downgraded to 3.3% from a 5.0% projection in April. This will be the first year in more than 3 decades that the rest of developing Asia will grow faster than the PRC. The forecast for India was lowered to 7.0% from 7.5%, due to higher-than-expected inflation and monetary tightening. Robust domestic demand in Indonesia and the Philippines are contributing to an improved outlook of 5.1% growth this year for Southeast Asia, although weaker prospects for global demand have led to a downgrade in the forecast for next year. The outlook for 2022 has also improved for the Caucasus and Central Asia, which is expected to see 3.9% growth this year, and for the economies of the Pacific, projected to expand 4.7% as tourism continues to bounce back from the pandemic.

The update to the *Asian Development Outlook (ADO) 2022* includes a theme chapter titled *Entrepreneurship in the Digital Age*. The chapter looks at how digital entrepreneurship can lead to greater growth and innovation, and how governments in the region can create an environment for digital entrepreneurs to thrive. 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, % per year					
	2021	2022		2023	
		April ADO 2022	September Update	April ADO 2022	September Update
<b>Developing Asia</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>4.9</b>
<b>Developing Asia excluding the PRC</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>5.3</b>
<b>Caucasus and Central Asia</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>4.2</b>
Armenia	5.7	2.8	7.0	3.8	4.5
Azerbaijan	5.6	3.7	4.2	2.8	2.8
Georgia	10.4	3.5	7.0	5.0	6.0
Kazakhstan	4.3	3.2	3.0	3.9	3.7
Kyrgyz Republic	3.6	2.0	3.0	2.5	3.5
Tajikistan	9.2	2.0	4.0	3.0	5.0
Turkmenistan	5.0	6.0	5.8	5.8	5.8
Uzbekistan	7.4	4.0	4.0	4.5	5.0
<b>East Asia</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>4.2</b>
Hong Kong, China	6.3	2.0	0.2	3.7	3.7
Mongolia	1.4	2.3	1.7	5.6	4.9
People's Republic of China	8.1	5.0	3.3	4.8	4.5
Republic of Korea	4.1	3.0	2.6	2.6	2.3
Taipei, China	6.6	3.8	3.4	3.0	3.0
<b>South Asia</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>6.5</b>
Afghanistan	...	...	...	...	...
Bangladesh	6.9	6.9	7.2	7.1	6.6
Bhutan	4.1	4.5	4.5	7.5	4.0
India	8.7	7.5	7.0	8.0	7.2
Maldives	37.1	11.0	8.2	12.0	10.4
Nepal	4.2	3.9	5.8	5.0	4.7
Pakistan	5.7	4.0	6.0	4.5	3.5
Sri Lanka	3.3	2.4	-8.8	2.5	-3.3
<b>Southeast Asia</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>5.0</b>
Brunei Darussalam	-1.6	4.2	2.2	3.6	3.6
Cambodia	3.0	5.3	5.3	6.5	6.2
Indonesia	3.7	5.0	5.4	5.2	5.0
Lao People's Democratic Republic	2.3	3.4	2.5	3.7	3.5
Malaysia	3.1	6.0	6.0	5.4	4.7
Myanmar	-5.9	-0.3	2.0	2.6	2.6
Philippines	5.7	6.0	6.5	6.3	6.3
Singapore	7.6	4.3	3.7	3.2	3.0
Thailand	1.5	3.0	2.9	4.5	4.2
Timor-Leste	1.5	2.5	2.3	3.1	3.0
Viet Nam	2.6	6.5	6.5	6.7	6.7
<b>The Pacific</b>	<b>-1.5</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>5.5</b>
Cook Islands	-29.1	9.1	10.5	11.2	11.2
Federated States of Micronesia	-1.2	2.2	2.2	4.2	4.1
Fiji	-4.1	7.1	11.7	8.5	8.5
Kiribati	1.5	1.8	1.8	2.3	2.3
Marshall Islands	-3.3	1.2	-1.2	2.2	-0.3
Nauru	1.6	1.0	1.2	2.4	2.2
Niue	...	...	...	...	...
Palau	-17.1	9.4	4.6	18.3	8.8
Papua New Guinea	-0.2	3.4	3.5	4.6	4.9
Samoa	-7.1	0.4	-5.3	2.2	2.0
Solomon Islands	-0.5	-3.0	-4.2	3.0	3.0
Tonga	-2.7	-1.2	-2.0	2.9	3.7
Tuvalu	1.5	3.0	2.5	3.0	2.7
Vanuatu	1.0	1.0	2.0	4.0	4.0

... = unavailable, ADO = Asian Development Outlook, GDP = gross domestic product, PRC= People's Republic of China.  
Notes: Because of the uncertain situation, no data and forecasts are provided for 2021–2023 in Afghanistan.

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## East Asia

### CHINA: Digital Trade New Growth Driver for BRI Countries

Thousands of years ago, in ancient China, traders traveled the Silk Road by camel and horse, overcoming hardship to sell Chinese silk, tea and other specialties to the West, meanwhile importing glass products, pearls, fruit and vegetables from abroad.



Now, in a live-broadcasting room at the ongoing 2022 China International Fair for Trade in Services (CIFTIS) in Beijing, a Sri Lankan streamer is introducing various biscuits and black teas from Sri Lanka to customers all over China using just a cell phone. With a few clicks of the finger, customers can purchase alpaca dolls from Peru, soap from Syria, rice and coffee beans from Laos, and other products from countries and regions involved in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), with the goods delivered direct to their door. The boom in such convenient services can be attributed to the success of mobile Internet and digital trade.

At the CIFTIS this year, experts pointed out that digital technology has become a new growth engine for BRI countries. "The COVID-19 epidemic led to unprecedented supply chain disruption," said Zhang Xiangchen, deputy director-general of the World Trade Organization. "However, it has also become a catalyst for businesses worldwide to significantly accelerate the supply of services through digital networks." According to Zhang, digitalization is fostering a new circle of innovation in services, which presents great opportunities for economic growth. "Global trade is constantly shaped and reshaped by technological innovations." A report entitled "Digital Trade: Development and Cooperation," which was released at the CIFTIS, shows that the global cross-border trade in digital services exceeded 3.8 trillion U.S. dollars in 2021, accounting for 63.6 percent of the total trade in services.

China's digital trade is developing rapidly, with its total imports and exports of digital services growing 22.3 percent year-on-year in 2021 to reach 359.69 billion U.S. dollars. "The digital Silk Road plays a leading role in high-quality BRI cooperation," said Wang Xiaohong, deputy head of the information department of the China Center for International Economic Exchanges. "China's software information technology, BeiDou Navigation Satellite System, blockchain technology and many digital products and services, such as games, animation, film and television, have all been widely used among BRI countries," Wang said. At the 2022 CIFTIS, which kicked off Wednesday, some enterprises from BRI countries also voiced their hopes of conducting further digital trade cooperation with China. In the Pakistan Pavilion, Aqeel Ahmed Chaudhry, head of WINZA, a Pakistani jewelry brand, has been speaking fluent Mandarin while introducing his jewelry to Chinese and foreign customers during the six-day event.

The dazzling array of more than 100 pieces of jewelry has attracted many customers. Chaudhry has operated a store in Shanghai for three years and plans to open another one in the northeastern Chinese city of Shenyang in October. During this year's CIFTIS, he visited some shopping malls in Beijing, hoping to enjoy Beijing's preferential policies for foreign enterprises and open a new store in the Chinese capital next year. "The COVID-19 epidemic has changed people's consumption habits, making online shopping more popular, especially among the young. As a businessman, I have to adapt to the latest trend," he said, adding that negotiations concerning online sales of his brand on China's major e-commerce platforms JD.com

and Tmall are underway. "If enterprises can make better use of digital tools, they will become more efficient and competitive," he said.

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## **ADB to Enhance Environmental Protection in Silk Road Region, PRC**

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$197 million loan to enhance ecological resilience and diversification of rural livelihoods in the Silk Road region of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Environmental degradation and weak ecological resilience are key concerns in Shaanxi, Gansu, and Qinghai provinces in the Silk Road region of the northwestern PRC. The region has complex eco-environment systems that are water scarce, have highly erodible low-quality soils, and poor-quality forestry and vegetation cover, which are exacerbated by climate change impacts. "Forest and wetland degradation is a critical ecological and environmental problem in these provinces," said ADB Senior Water Resources Specialist for East Asia Au Shion Yee. "The project is among the first in the northwest PRC to adopt the close-to-nature forestry approach as part of climate-resilient forestry planning and management."

All activities under the project will apply a close-to-nature forestry management approach, which treats forests as important public goods to support ecological systems in performing multiple functions. The project will support environmental protection through institutional strengthening and ecological restoration of fragile landscapes. This includes the provision of seedlings, planting, replanting, or replacing trees and shrub species in existing forested areas and upgrading of access roads in some forestry sites. Other activities include the construction of supporting facilities such as canals, bridges, water control mechanisms, and patrol stations. To enhance ecosystem services, environmental education, and management facilities, the project will promote sustainable ecotourism development and environmental education to scale up lessons for development impact. This includes support to the government's "beautiful village program" which aims to improve the rural living environment in the area. Under this, cultural exhibition facilities, green plazas, and tourist environmental education centers will be constructed.

The project will also promote best practices and knowledge sharing of close-to-nature forestry and wetland management. A trans-provincial coordination mechanism will be established to strengthen institutional arrangements between municipal, city, district, and county forestry and grassland bureaus for environment and ecosystem protection. A community forest management approach will be pilot tested to engage local communities as custodians of local areas in planning and operation and maintenance activities for forests and wetlands. The total cost of the project is \$327.23 million, with \$130.23 million counterpart financing from the

government. It is expected to be completed in 2029.

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## **China to Double Down on Stabilizing Foreign Trade, Foreign Investment to Consolidate Foundation of Economic Recovery**

China will take further measures to stabilize foreign trade and foreign investment, with a view to consolidating the foundation of economic recovery, according to the decision made at the State Council's Executive Meeting chaired by Premier Li Keqiang on Tuesday. Noting opening-up as China's basic national policy and foreign trade a strong underpinning for stable growth and employment, the meeting underscored the imperative for redoubled efforts to stabilize foreign trade and foreign investment. "We are facing big pressure in keeping foreign trade and foreign investment stable, with a notable slowdown of imports and exports. The first and foremost issue is to help businesses secure orders, by using all policy measures available to the full extent, such as the China Import and Export Fair (Canton Fair), the China International Import Expo, overseas warehouses and cross-border e-commerce," Li said. The meeting stressed the need to support enterprises in retaining orders and expanding market presence. Stronger efforts will be made to ensure energy and labor supply and logistics for foreign trade companies.

Full support will be given when necessary, to ensure the delivery of contracts. The special funds for international economic cooperation and foreign trade will be used fully at a faster pace. Services for companies to participate in overseas exhibitions and conduct business negotiations will be improved. New forms of foreign trade will be promoted. A number of new integrated pilot zones for cross-border e-commerce will be established without delay. Greater support will be given to building overseas warehouses. Goods transport between inland localities and coastal ports as well as domestic land transport will be made more efficient, to speed up trans-shipment, inbound and outbound transport of goods. Industrial and supply chains will be kept secure. Unwarranted charges for port services will be continuously abolished. "We must roll out signature projects of critical importance without delay, to galvanize foreign investment, and bolster confidence and expectations," Li said. Supply of production factors will be ensured to speed up the launch of key foreign-funded projects. Further measures will be taken to facilitate the border entry and exit of business personnel and technicians employed by foreign companies, as well as their families.

Leading provincial regions in foreign trade and foreign investment need to step up to their responsibilities, and better play their backbone roles. Related departments need to enhance coordination and services. "The eastern coastal provinces take up nearly 70 percent of our country's foreign trade. Their leading role must be fully brought to bear, to contribute their part to stable performance of foreign trade and foreign

investment," Li said. The meeting decided that micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and self-employed households in the manufacturing sector could defer the payment of five taxes and two fees (namely, corporate income tax, personal income tax, domestic value-added tax, domestic consumption tax and urban maintenance and construction tax as well as education surcharge and local education surcharge). Deferrals that have expired will be extended for another four months starting from September 1. Such arrangement shall enable 440 billion yuan (63.66 billion U.S. dollars) of tax relief.

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## **China Mulls Measures to Further Boost Foreign Investment**

China will take measures to boost foreign investment, with the manufacturing industry as a priority, the country's top economic planner said Monday. China will facilitate the exchange of business personnel of foreign companies on the premise of strictly implementing epidemic prevention, as part of the efforts to address their outstanding problems, Meng Wei, spokesperson for the National Development and Reform Commission, told a press conference. Alignment between the foreign trade and foreign companies and their upstream and downstream counterparts will also be strengthened, Meng said. China is accelerating the revision of the industry catalog that encourages foreign investment, with a focus on channeling more investment into sectors such as advanced manufacturing, high-end technologies and modern services, as well as the central, western and northeastern regions of the country, Meng noted. The country will also organize promotion activities for industry investment and cooperation to set up an exchange platform for multinationals and localities. Despite some factors brought about by the complex external environment denting the confidence of foreign investors, "China's foreign investment utilization saw rapid expansion this year," Meng said. Foreign direct investment into the Chinese mainland, in actual use, expanded 16.4 percent year on year to 892.74 billion yuan in the first eight months of the year, showed data from the Ministry of Commerce Monday. In U.S. dollar terms, the inflow went up 20.2 percent year on year to 138.41 billion dollars.

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## **China Sees Steady Progress in 5G Base Station Construction**

The number of 5G base stations in China registered stable growth amid the country's efforts to advance the construction of its 5G network in recent years, official data shows. China had over 2.1 million 5G base stations by the end of August, accounting for 19.8 percent of its mobile base stations, up 5.5 percentage points from the end of 2021, according to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology. Some

677,000 5G base stations were built in the first eight months of this year, according to the ministry. The number of 5G mobile users in China hit 475 million by the end of July, according to data from the ministry. China has built the world's largest 5G network. By the end of 2021, the number of 5G base stations in the country accounted for over 60 percent of the global total, according to a report from the National Bureau of Statistics.

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## **Economic Growth in People's Republic of China to Moderate to 3.3% in 2022**

Economic growth in the People's Republic of China (PRC) is expected to moderate to 3.3% this year, amid restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic and tepid consumer demand, according to a new report by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The PRC's economy is forecast to grow 4.5% in 2023, according to the Asian Development Outlook (ADO) 2022 Update, released today. Inflation is projected to accelerate next year due to higher food prices. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to weigh on consumer confidence in the PRC, while an ailing property sector is holding back investment. External trade is projected to moderate in the second half of 2022, as demand for consumer goods softens in advanced economies amid rising inflation and energy prices. However, higher infrastructure investment and government spending are expected to support growth in the second half, as the government seeks to stoke household demand, support the property sector, and address high youth unemployment.

"Growth has slowed sharply as COVID-19 lockdowns disrupted economic activity," said ADB Officer-in-Charge for the PRC Hao Zhang. "However, we expect economic growth to pick up in the second half of this year, with services recovering in line with improving household demand." Consumer price inflation in the PRC is forecast to average 2.3% in 2022 and 2.5% in 2023. Driven by rising pork prices, food inflation is expected to remain elevated in the second half of this year. Risks to the PRC's outlook include renewed outbreaks of COVID-19, which have prevented domestic consumer demand from fully recovering; further deterioration in the property market; and mounting risks in the financial system—especially at smaller banks, which could temporarily disrupt the market and trigger policy interventions. Strains on global value chains, caused by temporary supply shortages or transport bottlenecks, and slower-than-expected growth in advanced economies could also further dampen external trade.

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## **China's Consumption Market Expands with Strong Impetus over Decade: Report**

China's consumer market has logged rapid development in the last decade, with its structure becoming more balanced and new business forms gaining steam, an official report showed on Thursday. Retail sales of consumer goods, a major indicator of the country's consumption strength, hit a record high of 44 trillion yuan (about 6.3 trillion U.S. dollars) in 2021, 2.1 times the figure in 2012, according to the report released by the National Bureau of Statistics. China has kept its economic growth within a reasonable range, which is leading to the steady growth of personal incomes, the report said, noting that the country's consumer market has great potential and resilience. Despite the disruptions brought by COVID-19, China's total retail sales of consumer goods rose 12.5 percent year on year in 2021, and the average annual growth during the 2020-2021 period hit 3.9 percent, the data showed.

China's urban consumption logged stable growth over the past decade thanks to rapid urbanization progress. In the 2013-2021 period, retail sales of consumer goods in urban areas climbed 8.1 percent on average each year. During the same period, retail sales of consumer goods in rural towns and villages respectively expanded an average of 10.4 percent and 9.8 percent each year, as rural residents saw their income growth surpass that of urban residents, narrowing the urban-rural income gap. Over the last decade, online shopping has become a bright spot in China's consumer market, and it is a typical example of the country's emerging forms of consumption. From 2015 to 2021, the average annual growth of online retail sales of physical goods topped 20 percent, and online retail sales of physical goods accounted for 24.5 percent of China's total retail sales of consumer goods in 2021.

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## **China's Free Trade Area Network Contributes Significantly to Total Foreign Trade**

China has been expanding its free trade area network since its accession to the World Trade Organization in 2001, Shu Jueting, spokesperson for the Ministry of Commerce, said Thursday. So far, China has signed 19 free trade agreements with 26 countries and regions, with partners covering Asia, Oceania, Latin America, Europe and Africa, Shu told a regular media conference. The volume of trade between China and its free trade partners accounts for about 35 percent of the country's total foreign trade, the spokesperson said. The country will further increase the proportion of trade in goods with zero tariffs, ease market access for trade in services and investment, take an active part in negotiations on new rules for the digital economy and environmental protection, and develop new systems for an open economy at a higher level, Shu said. China will also ink more free trade agreements with willing partners, and work to enhance effectiveness of these agreements to benefit businesses and people better and faster, Shu added.

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## China Sees Booming Development in Healthcare Tourism

As stars twinkle and breezes whistle, Wang Hui drifted off to sleep in a forest cabin nestled in the mountains. Wang, a resident from Taiyuan, capital of north China's Shanxi Province, took a 4-hour-long drive to Songmiao Village in neighboring Jincheng City, to enjoy his holiday in nature. "Living in the scenic mountains keeps me away from the hustle and bustle of the city," Wang said. The cabin costs 600 yuan (about 85 U.S. dollars) a night, but he believed it was worthwhile since his pressure was greatly relieved. The Songmiao Village rebranded itself from a small mountain village into a "sleep-friendly resort town" in 2021. Tourists are expected to improve their sleep here by taking Chinese herbal medicine baths, tasting Chinese traditional medicinal cuisine, and doing physical activities such as hiking and cycling. The occupancy rate of the cabins and guesthouses in the town stood at about 70 percent in 2021.

Many local governments around the country have rolled out a slew of policies to boost healthcare tourism development by combining local resource advantages. Zhang Fuming, vice governor of Shanxi Province, said that the province has introduced 17 measures and set up a healthcare industry development fund of 2 billion yuan to subsidize related projects and invigorate the market vitality. Shanxi's Jincheng City takes advantage of local herbal medicine resources and ancient villages to build a cluster of healthcare and recreation guesthouses. The healthcare and recreation park in Jiaozuo City, central China's Henan Province, features Tai Chi, a traditional Chinese martial art that focuses on exploiting the human body's inner energy to achieve physical and mental harmony. China's health industry market is estimated to reach 16 trillion yuan by 2030, according to the country's Healthy China 2030 blueprint.

The future market size of the healthcare industry might be even larger, said Chen Bin, vice director of the China Tourism Commodity And Equipment Association. The healthcare industry is promising, said Zhang Xiangqun, deputy general manager of Aerospace Medical & Healthcare Technology Group Co., Ltd, a subsidiary of China General Technology (Group) Holding Co., Ltd. The latter established a specialized healthcare company at the end of 2021, with the business volume expected to exceed over 10 billion yuan. "The healthcare tourism industry will provide consumers with better and diversified products to meet people's consumption needs and provide new momentum for the market," said Jing Linbo, president of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Evaluation Studies.

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## China's Contributions to Global Development

China is strengthening its efforts to push forward global development, addressing fundamental issues such as poverty, healthcare and climate change in an era of unsettling challenges and uncertainties. By pooling strengths from across the world through multilateral cooperation mechanisms and initiatives such as the Global Development Initiative (GDI), China is seeking international cooperation to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### **POVERTY ALLEVIATION**

Eliminating poverty is the common aspiration of all people across the world, and a shared mission of the international community. The first goal of the SDGs is to "end poverty in all its forms everywhere." China achieved its goal of eradicating absolute poverty as scheduled, improving the living standards of hundreds of millions of people through decades of hard work. Over the past 40 years, China has contributed close to three-quarters of the global reduction in the number of people living in extreme poverty, according to a joint report released in April by China's Ministry of Finance, the Development Research Center of the State Council, and the World Bank. As the world's most populous country forges ahead toward its rural revitalization goal, it is sharing its valuable experience in fighting poverty with other developing countries.

In Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia, China has launched pilot projects to improve the organizational abilities of local villages, encourage farmers to combine their efforts through agricultural activities, and cultivate a new vision for development to shake off poverty, according to a white paper titled "China's International Development Cooperation in the New Era," issued by the State Council Information Office in 2021. China has also organized training programs and co-hosted seminars with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization to share ideas and actions for targeted poverty alleviation with other developing countries, the white paper stated.

### **ENHANCING HEALTHCARE**

China has always emphasized putting people and their lives first, and has been actively assisting developing countries to improve their public health systems and medical services. From 2015 to 2019, China dispatched 3,588 medical workers overseas in 202 groups, and they in turn provided treatment to 11 million patients, organized professional training for local medical workers, offered free mobile clinic services, and donated medicines and equipment, according to the white paper. After the outbreak of COVID-19, China continuously offered vaccine aid and medical support to less developed countries. As of Aug. 23, China has provided 189 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines to 27 African countries since the Eighth Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in November 2021. Localized annual production capacities, in cooperation with African partners, now total nearly 400 million doses. By 2030, China will have sent 5,000 professionals from the China Medical Team to other developing countries in need to help build up their infectious



disease response and medical treatment capacities, according to the deliverables of the High-level Dialogue on Global Development held in June.

### **PROTECTING NATURE**

Adhering to the vision of the harmonious coexistence of humans and nature, China has prioritized clean energy development, biodiversity protection and climate change response, among other fields. The country is aiming to peak its carbon dioxide emissions before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2060. Currently, China's installed capacity of renewable energy is 1.1 billion kilowatts. Its hydropower, wind power, solar power and biomass power capacities all rank first globally, the National Development and Reform Commission said on Thursday. China has launched a clean energy pilot project to increase power supply while minimizing environmental impacts in Gabon, and supported Fiji in working toward the goal of raising renewable energy to 90 percent of its total energy consumption by 2025, according to the white paper. The first phase of the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity was held in China last year to negotiate an effective post-2020 global biodiversity framework that can bend the curve of biodiversity loss. China announced at that time that it would invest 1.5 billion yuan (about 214.5 million U.S. dollars) to establish the Kunming Biodiversity Fund to support biodiversity protection in developing countries.

### **GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE**

Since its inception a year ago, the GDI has received a warm response from the international community, with more than 100 countries extending their support to date. The Group of Friends of the GDI was launched at the UN in January, and over 60 countries have joined the forum so far. The GDI has taken a leap from "laying the foundation" to "building the framework," and a stride from "freehand brushwork" to "meticulous painting," Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi said when chairing the Ministerial Meeting of the Group of Friends of the GDI on Tuesday. On the achievements made in the implementation of the GDI, Wang said that cooperation platforms have been built, resource input has been increased, and urgent challenges have been addressed in the past year. The China-Pacific Island Countries Climate Action Cooperation Center has been established, Wang said. The Global Development and South-South Cooperation Fund was also launched to support the cooperation projects of the GDI. Since the beginning of this year, China has provided emergency food assistance to developing countries and will continue to do so, according to Wang. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres lauded the GDI at the same meeting, calling it a valued contribution to addressing common challenges and accelerating the transition to a more sustainable and inclusive future.

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**China Achieves Initial Success in New Infrastructure Construction**

China has achieved initial success in new infrastructure construction, which has greatly facilitated the country's social and economic development over the past decade, officials said Monday. Zhang Zhihua, an official with the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), said China has quickened its steps in upgrading information infrastructure as well as advancing infrastructure integration and innovation. The length of China's optical fiber network has increased 2.7 times over the past decade, and the number of data center racks has topped 5.9 million, Zhang told a press conference. Smart devices are being integrated into various industries and businesses such as transport, energy supply, and industrial production, as well as facilities concerning people's well-being like e-commerce, telemedicine, and online education, he said. In terms of innovation, Zhang said up to 32 of China's planned 77 major national science and technology infrastructure projects have been put into operation, while centers on engineering research, enterprise technology, and industrial innovation are being set up across the country.

Zhang particularly mentioned advancement in China's "east data, west computing" project, a mega data project launched in February this year and designed to have the country's less developed inland regions store and process data transmitted from economically advanced eastern areas. In the "initial areas" of the project, construction has started on more than 60 new data centers, which involves over 1.1 million standard racks and over 400 billion yuan (about 56.9 billion U.S. dollars), he said, noting that the proportion of data centers in the western region has increased steadily. Song Wen, an official with the National Energy Administration, revealed that with the energy sector seeking a faster shift to digital, internet-based, and smart-tech models, progress has been made in fields such as smart grid, mining, and power generation, as well as energy storage. The coverage rate of China's power distribution automation system has exceeded 90 percent by 2021, and the country has seen the completion of over 800 smart mining sites and a number of "5G plus" smart thermal power plants, according to Song.

Zhang said new infrastructure has greatly empowered China's economic and social development by offering sustained support to new technology exploration, effectively backing the development of the digital economy and fully facilitating the improvement of people's well-being. "While each round of scientific and technological revolution introduces new infrastructure, each round of infrastructure construction would bring in an upgrade in economic transformation," he said, voicing optimism in the prospect of new infrastructure investment. With more supporting financial and fiscal policies in place, China will move faster to kick off a number of new infrastructure projects, according to Zhang. He said to further support these projects, the NDRC will boost efforts to enhance coordination and planning, increase spending and shore up the weak links. Works will be done to improve the basic networks in the medium and small cities in the central and western regions, bridge the digital gap, and make industrial and supply chains more resilient, with priority given to new infrastructure

that meets the public's urgent needs and stimulates the real economy, he said.

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## **China's Bond Market Gains Strength in Serving Real Economy**

China's bond market is playing a growing role in serving the real economy, data from the country's central bank shows. By the end of August, the balance of various bonds in China totaled 142.3 trillion yuan (about 20.24 trillion U.S. dollars), the second-highest globally, according to the People's Bank of China. The country's direct financing scale has expanded thanks to the development of the bond market. Net bond financing accounted for 31 percent of the country's total social financing by the end of last month, up 10 percentage points from the same period in 2017. With a balance of 32.2 trillion yuan by the end of August, corporate credit bonds have become the second-largest financing channel of the real economy, after credit loans, boasting lower costs than the latter in general. Bond types have also been enriched. The balance of local government bonds stood at 34.6 trillion yuan by the end of August, making it the most significant variety in China's bond market.

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## **China Makes Great Strides in Rural Vitalization over Past 5 Years**

China has made solid progress in pushing forward rural vitalization as planned over the last five years, the country's top economic planner said on Wednesday. In 2018, China released a five-year plan for its rural vitalization strategy, mapping out a number of major projects, programs and actions. All 59 of the plan's key tasks, including consolidating agricultural production capacity and improving the safety of drinking water in rural areas, have been carried out steadily and have yielded good results, Wu Xiao, an official from the National Development and Reform Commission, told a press conference. In 2021, agricultural technology progress contributed 61 percent of the sector's development, up 3.5 percentage points from 2017, Wu said. And the crop cultivation and harvest mechanization rate has exceeded 72 percent, up 6 percentage points from 2017. As of the green development of agriculture, the application of chemical fertilizers and pesticides has experienced negative growth over the years, while the utilization rate of livestock manure has significantly increased. The construction of rural infrastructure, such as water, electricity, road and telecommunication facilities, has been boosted, Wu said, adding that tap water is now accessible in 84 percent of rural households. The per capita disposable income of rural residents increased by 28.9 percent in real terms from 2017 to 2021, Wu said.

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## **Improved Medical Services at Chinese Public Hospitals over Past Decade**

China has taken a slew of measures to upgrade medical services and strengthen capacity building at public hospitals over the past decade, said the National Health Commission (NHC). The country has continued to promote the comprehensive reform and high-quality development of public hospitals, which are the mainstay of China's medical service system, the NHC said at a media conference on Wednesday. Efforts have been made to accelerate the expansion of quality medical resources and balanced regional distribution of medical services, and to establish a new pattern of orderly diagnosis and treatment. About half of the public hospitals at or above the level of grade two in China's three-tier hospital grading system now provide medical appointment services, with precise scheduling available at over 4,800 of them, according to the NHC.

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## **China Expects Sustained Consumption Recovery**

China's consumer market is in a sound trend of development and is likely to see continuous recovery in the next stage, a spokesperson with the Ministry of Commerce (MOC) said Thursday. The country's retail sales of consumer goods rose 5.4 percent year on year in August, up 2.7 percentage points from July, MOC spokesperson Shu Jueting told a regular press conference. Big-ticket consumption saw sustained growth. For example, major companies' retail sales of automobile and home appliance products climbed 15.9 percent and 3.4 percent year on year, respectively last month, continuing the upward trend since June, Shu said. Shu also highlighted the steady expansion of online consumption and the gradual recovery of service consumption, noting that online retail sales of physical goods went up 5.8 percent year on year in the first eight months of 2022, while catering revenues logged 8.4-percent year-on-year growth in August.

China's policies on stabilizing growth and promoting consumption have effectively boosted the consumer market recently, Shu said, adding that more efforts will be made to further promote consumption recovery. The ministry will focus on promoting consumption in key fields including automobile, green and intelligent home appliance as well as catering and accommodation, among others. It will create new scenarios of consumption through digital empowerment and the integration of business, tourism, culture and sports, make good use of consumption platforms, such as consumption festivals and expos, and promote the development of new business forms, Shu said. Measures will also be taken to build county-level commercial systems, improve the supply chain for agricultural products, and accelerate the development of centers for international consumption.

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## **China Unveils Measures to Secure Fiscal Support for Construction of National Parks**

China has introduced a raft of measures to guarantee fiscal support for building a nature reserve system with national parks at its heart. A fiscal guarantee system will be basically established by 2025 and the system will be improved by 2035, according to a guideline from the Ministry of Finance and the National Forestry and Grassland Administration. The fiscal support will mainly go to ecosystem protection and restoration, building and operation of national parks, coordinated development of national parks, scientific research and science popularization, as well as international cooperation and social participation. The expenditure responsibilities of the central and local governments will be specified, and fiscal input will be increased. A compensation system for ecological protection will be established and improved, detailed preferential tax policies will be implemented, and an innovative and diversified fund-raising mechanism will be explored, according to the guideline.

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## **More Benefits to Chinese Females over Past Decade**

Over the past decade, benefits to Chinese women have further increased, as shown by a series of facts and statistics, according to a press conference Thursday. During this time, women's federations at various levels in China have launched over 200,000 practical skill training sessions in rural areas, benefiting nearly 20 million female trainees, said the conference by the All-China Women's Federation. Over 830,000 female scientists and researchers have been mobilized to participate in the provision of such services as boosting the public's scientific knowledge and assisting in rural development. More than 7 million women have received business and entrepreneurial support over the past 10 years, according to the conference. The past decade also saw enhanced protection for women's legitimate rights and interests, with various services such as counseling, complaints handling, and legal assistance provided for women. Charity projects to boost the welfare of women and children have also been launched with an increasing scope of coverage, said the conference. Moreover, women's federations in China have maintained friendly exchanges with over 420 women's associations, institutions and international organizations in 145 countries, it said.

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## **China PMI Picks Up in September, Industry Sentiment Improves**

China's factory activities returned to expansion territory in September, with most industries showing improved sentiment, as the recovery momentum of the world's second-largest economy continues to consolidate. The purchasing managers' index (PMI) for China's manufacturing sector came in at 50.1 in September, up from 49.4 in August, data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed Friday. A reading above 50 indicates expansion, while a reading below 50 reflects contraction. "As policies and measures to stabilize the economy continue to take effect this month, and the negative effects of heatwaves wane, the manufacturing PMI has bounced back to expansion territory," the bureau's senior statistician Zhao Qinghe said. Business activities of manufacturing companies have picked up pace as the manufacturing sector enters peak season, Zhao said.

The sub-index for production reached 51.5 in September, up 1.7 points from the previous month. Specifically, the PMI of industries such as food and beverages, medicine, and equipment manufacturing rose to above 54, indicating expanded production. Demand continued to improve, as the sub-index for new orders rose 0.6 points from August to 49.8. Although the sub-index of new orders remained below the boom-bust line, the country's demand contraction has narrowed as supporting policies were implemented to push up domestic demand, said Zheng Houcheng, director of Yingda Securities Research Institute. In September, the PMI for large enterprises edged up 0.6 points to reach 51.1, remaining in the expansion area for two consecutive months. The business environment of large enterprises has secured its position above the boom-bust line, thanks to a flurry of successive policies from the government to stabilize the economy since late August, said Wen Bin, chief analyst at China Minsheng Bank.

Positive effects of the policies are also rippling through medium and small enterprises, as the PMI of medium and small enterprises rose 0.8 points and 0.7 points, respectively, compared with that in August. The confidence of manufacturing companies has strengthened in September, with the sub-index for production and operation activity expectation standing at 53.4, up 1.1 points from the previous month. Enterprises in industries including agricultural and sideline food processing, automobile, and railway were especially upbeat about the market prospects, as their index for production and operation activity expectation stayed above 58 in September. Friday's data also showed that the PMI for China's non-manufacturing sector came in at 50.6 in September, down from 52.6 in August. "The foundations of economic recovery will be further consolidated, as supporting policies continue to take effect," said Fu Linghui, an official with the National Bureau of Statistics.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 09/30/2022

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**JAPAN: How Japan Is Moving Towards a Cashless Society with Digital Salary Payments**

The Japanese government is preparing to introduce a system for companies to pay salaries digitally – without going through bank accounts – by spring 2023. By promoting this system, which allows companies to transfer salaries to workers using smartphone payment apps, the government hopes to solve the complex issues facing foreign workers in Japan, expand the financial services market and deregulation, and promote growth. However, according to a survey of 247 companies conducted by Works Human Intelligence, a leading developer of integrated HR systems for corporate clients, less than 30% of companies are considering or will consider implementing digital salary payment. The survey found that system and operational costs and increased operational person-hours were the main barriers. The potential benefits of paying salaries digitally are significant. It reduces administrative fees associated with payroll payments and helps foreign workers, who often find it difficult to open a bank account. Companies can also indirectly offer benefits such as cashback and point rewards for using QR code payments and e-money payments as part of their employee benefits program. On the other hand, the survey highlighted that most companies are not yet ready to adopt such a system.

In 2018, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) formulated the "Cashless Vision," which proposed measures for Japan to move towards becoming a cashless society. It aims to increase cashless transactions to 40% by 2025, when the Osaka Expo is held, and possibly 80% in the future. The goal is also to help solve issues such as labour shortages, regional revitalization, and productivity improvement. The Cashless Promotion Council, which brings together government, educational institutions, research institutes, and private companies, was also established in 2018 to support this initiative across industries for a cashless society. According to its roadmap, the percentage of cashless payments in Japan rose from 13.2% in 2010 to 32.5% in 2021. This is slow compared to other Asian countries: South Korea, China and Singapore all had higher percentages in 2020, at 93.6%, 83%, and 60.4%, respectively. Japan has recently eased its COVID-19 entry restrictions, and expectations have been rising for the economic benefits that tourism could bring. Foreign tourists are accustomed to the convenience of cashless payments, and Japan needs to move fast on this in order to fully take advantage of this economic opportunity.

From <https://www.weforum.org> 09/21/2022

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## **Japan's Reopening Poised to Deliver Vital GDP Boost**

Japan's determination to loosen border controls is predicted to buoy an economic system going through headwinds, as inbound tourism recovers with assistance from a weak yen. Starting Oct. 11, Japan will open its doorways to particular person vacationers and resume visa-free entry for short-term vacationers, Prime Minister

Fumio Kishida stated Thursday in New York. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, 90% of tourists to Japan got here for tourism — and of those, impartial vacationers accounted for 80%. Japan welcomed 169,800 guests this August in information launched Wednesday by the Japan National Tourism Organization, down 93% from the identical month in 2019. The U.S. and Europe eased entry restrictions earlier, with the restoration in tourism demand spreading globally.

There had been practically 250 million worldwide vacationer arrivals worldwide within the first 5 months of 2022, in accordance with the United Nations World Tourism Organization — roughly tripling from a 12 months earlier. Arrivals recovered to almost half of pre-pandemic 2019 ranges. International vacationer arrivals in Europe may attain 65% to 80% of 2019 ranges in 2022, in accordance with the UNWTO forecast. In the Americas, the determine may attain 63% to 76%. Thanks to the looser restrictions, Japan may draw roughly 15.3 million worldwide vacationers in 2023, or 48% of 2019, in accordance with an estimate by Rino Onodera, an economist on the Mizuho Research Institute. This change is predicted to raise gross home product by 0.74% in 2023 from annualized GDP for the April-June quarter, earlier than the easing.

From <https://www.newsonjapan.com> 09/25/2022

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## **Japan Begins Talks to Introduce Emergency Roaming**

Japan's communications ministry Wednesday started discussions to introduce emergency roaming across networks of mobile phone carriers, to be available in the event of natural disasters and communications network failures. Experts and officials at four carriers including NTT Docomo Inc. participated in the first meeting of a study group set up by the ministry. The group is set to outline a basic policy by year-end. "Mobile phone services are key social infrastructure," communications minister Minoru Terada stressed at the meeting. "Building a system enabling continuous use of them in emergencies is an important task." KDDI Corp.'s <9433> major network failure in July left some subscribers unable to make emergency calls for long periods. This led to calls for enabling emergency roaming across carriers as a means to secure stable mobile communications in times of emergency. The study group will discuss whether to limit such roaming services to emergency calls or open them up for general voice calls and data communications. Other issues will include requirements and rules for such services.

From <https://www.nippon.com> 09/28/2022

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## **SOUTH KOREA: Nearly 560,000 Foreign Hacking Attempts Against Govt. Detected over Past 6 Yrs**

The government has seen nearly 560,000 outside hacking attempts into its key



computer systems over the past six years, with a combined 43 percent from China and the United States, a report showed Tuesday. According to the interior ministry report submitted to Rep. Lee Hae-sik of the main opposition Democratic Party, 558,674 hacking attempts into key government computer systems were detected between 2017 and July this year. Since reaching 62,532 cases in 2017, such hacking attempts have been on an upward trend to amount to 94,980 in 2018, 124,754 in 2019, 108,810 in 2020 and 101,123 last year, the report showed. Internet protocol analyses showed 127,908, or 22.9 percent, of the hacking attempts detected were traced to China, while 113,086 cases, or 20.2 percent, were found to be from the US, the report also showed. Hacking attempts that originated in South Korea accounted for 8.5 percent, followed by those in Russia at 4.7 percent, Germany at 2.8 percent and Brazil at 2.4 percent. A total of 40.9 percent of the hacking attempts detected were aimed at information leakage, followed by information gathering at 16.5 percent, according to the report.

From <http://www.koreaherald.com> 09/13/2022

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## **Yoon Vows to Raise S. Korea's AI Competitiveness to 3rd in World**

President Yoon Suk-yeol vowed Wednesday to raise the country's artificial intelligence (AI) competitiveness to No. 3 in the world as part of efforts to rebuild the nation. Yoon made the promise while presiding over a regular economic meeting in Gwangju, 268 kilometers south of Seoul, saying he will also double the size of the country's data market to over 50 trillion won (US\$35 billion). The meeting came on the heels of Yoon's unveiling of the "New York plan," which centers on seeking a digital order that can help realize the universal values of freedom, human rights, peace and solidarity. To achieve the plan, the government said at the meeting that it will pursue a new digital strategy focused on making South Korea the world's top digital nation, using digital technologies to enhance industries' competitiveness, and creating a society where everyone can enjoy the benefits of digital technologies, among other goals.

The meeting was held at the Kimdaejung Convention Center and brought together officials from relevant government ministries and businesses, including Samsung Electronics and SK Telecom. Yoon also toured the "AI Tech+ 2022" exhibition under way at the convention center, where he tested various technologies, including a kiosk that can be used by disabled people and an AI-based photo transformation technology. This was the president's first visit to the Jeolla provinces since May, when he attended a ceremony commemorating the May 18, 1980, democracy uprising in Gwangju. During the campaign, he visited the city and pledged to transform it into a leading AI and digital data hub.

From <https://en.yna.co.kr> 09/28/2022

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## South-East Asia

### **CAMBODIA: UNDP Jointly Launch SDG Investor Map to Accelerate Sustainable Development**

The Cambodian government and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) on Wednesday jointly launched the Cambodia SDG Investor Map, a market intelligence tool that identifies viable investment opportunity areas aligned with the Cambodia Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The UNDP estimated last year that by 2025 the funding available for development in Cambodia will reach 23.4 billion U.S. dollars, or 69.8 percent of the kingdom's gross domestic product (GDP), driven mainly by domestic resource mobilization, foreign direct investment and remittances. As such, the map was created to identify investment opportunities in priority sectors that have both strong financial and development impact potential. According to a joint press statement, the Cambodia Map is added to another 22 country SDG Investor Maps, accessible on the SDG Investor Platform. "It highlights 15 investment opportunity areas that cover business models across six SDG priority sectors, namely, agriculture and allied industries, financial services, infrastructure, renewable energy, education, and healthcare," the statement said. The map also identifies another 10 'white spaces' aligned with national development needs that have potential for growth but would require more private sector participation or scope for more policy support, it added. Following the launch of the SDG Investor Map, UNDP Cambodia and its partners will bring together potential investors, investee companies and policymakers for partnership building and boosting investments in the Cambodia SDG priority areas identified in the map, the statement said.

*From <https://english.news.cn> 08/31/2022*

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### **Renewable Energy Accounts for 40 Pct of Cambodia's Total Energy: PM**

Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Techo Hun Sen said on Thursday that renewable energy from hydropower, solar energy and biomass energy has accounted for 40 percent of the kingdom's total energy. In a pre-recorded video statement delivered to the opening ceremony of the 40th ASEAN Ministers on Energy Meeting, which was held in person and virtually in Phnom Penh, Hun Sen said Cambodia has actively integrated renewable energy sources into the energy mix. "In 2021, energy from renewable energy sources, including hydropower, solar energy and biomass energy, increased to 40 percent of Cambodia's total energy," he said. "Also, in terms of the power capacity of Cambodia's energy sources, the share of renewable energy sources is around 55 percent of the total installed power capacity." Energy demand in Cambodia had surged to 4,014 megawatts (MWs) in 2021. Some 3,033 MWs were generated locally by hydroelectric dams, coal-fired power plants, diesel-fired power plants, solar power plants and biomass power plants, and 981

MWs were imported from neighboring Thailand, Laos and Vietnam, according to the Electricity Authority of Cambodia. Hun Sen said for the way forward, Cambodia will continue to focus on the development of energy efficiency and renewable energy to the fullest of Cambodia's energy supply system, along with the reduction of the development of energy sources that use fossil fuels, such as coal and oil.

*From <https://english.news.cn/09/15/2022>*

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## **Cambodia Raises Minimum Wage for Garment Factory Workers for 2023**

Cambodia on Wednesday set a new monthly minimum wage for workers in the country's garment, footwear and travel goods sector at some 200 U.S. dollars from 2023, up 3.09 percent from the current level of 194 U.S. dollars, Labor Minister Ith Samheng said. The announcement came after the National Council for Minimum Wage voted on a minimum wage of about 198 U.S. dollars per month for next year, which was then added by 2 U.S. dollars by the government. The 51 council members include representatives of the government, the manufacturers' group, and the trade union. "Today, the National Council for Minimum Wage decided on the monthly minimum wage of 198 dollars and Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Techo Hun Sen added another 2 dollars, so the monthly minimum wage for the garment, footwear and travel goods industry for 2023 is 200 dollars," Samheng told reporters after the vote. "This new minimum wage will take effect from Jan. 1, 2023," he added.

Besides wage, workers in the garment, footwear and travel goods sector will also receive other fringe benefits of 21-32 U.S. dollars per month for regular attendance, transportation, rent and seniority bonus, the minister said. "This is a good sign for our workers, and I believe that the wage hike will contribute further to improving the livelihoods of our workers," he said. Garment, footwear and travel goods sector is the largest foreign exchange earner for the Southeast Asian country. It involves about 1,100 factories and branches with approximately 750,000 workers, mostly females. Nang Sothy, co-chair of the Government-Private Working Group on Industrial Relations, said employers were pleased to raise workers' wage despite difficulties facing them due in part to the Ukraine crisis. "The 6-dollar increase will not make a big change to the livelihoods of our workers because of rising inflation, but we hope it will help ease their hardships," he said. Meanwhile, Sothy urged workers to work harder to increase productivity so as to boost competitiveness in the sector. Pav Sina, president of the Collective Union of Movement of Workers, which represents more than 50,000 workers, said although the wage hike failed to meet the union's demand of 215 U.S. dollars, it was a positive step toward improving the workers' livelihoods. "The new minimum wage is acceptable," he told reporters.

*From <https://english.news.cn/09/21/2022>*

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## **PHILIPPINES: Unemployment Rate Dips to 5.2 Pct in July**

The unemployment rate in the Philippines dipped to 5.2 percent in July, with 2.6 million of the Filipino labor force jobless, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) said on Thursday. The unemployment rate in July was the lowest reported this year, PSA head Dennis Mapa told reporters, saying the unemployed population is around 400,000 lower than the number registered in June. Many of the areas in the Philippines are now under COVID-19 alert level one, the lowest of the five-tiered pandemic restrictions. The low COVID-19 daily case count and the lenient rules allow the country to open many businesses providing jobs to people.

*From <https://english.news.cn/09/08/2022>*

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## **ADB Sees Robust 2022 GDP Growth for the Philippines**

A strong rebound in domestic demand with the easing of COVID-19 mobility restrictions in the country will support robust growth for the Philippine economy in 2022, despite higher inflation due to global and local price pressures, according to a report released today by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The Philippines' gross domestic product (GDP) will grow 6.5% in 2022, the same as forecast in July but up from the bank's April forecast of 6.0%, according to Asian Development Outlook (ADO) 2022 Update. The growth projection for 2023 is kept at 6.3% as monetary policy tightening and accelerating inflation both crimp domestic demand. Inflation is now expected to quicken to 5.3% in 2022, up from the July forecast of 4.9% and 4.2% in the April ADO 2022 report, underpinned by sharp upward shocks to global energy and commodity prices. The negative impact of natural disasters on domestic agricultural supply will likely lead to higher food prices until the end of the year. The inflation forecast for 2023 is kept at 4.3% since the return to steady economic growth will keep inflation relatively stable, and with energy prices likely to decelerate.

"The normalization of socioeconomic activity will usher the Philippine economy to a steady, pre-pandemic pace of expansion," said ADB Philippines Country Director Kelly Bird. "The recovery in tourism and private investments, coupled with sustained public spending on large infrastructure projects and remittances from overseas Filipinos, will bolster the country's economic recovery this year." However, according to the report, downside risks to the growth outlook could come from a sharper slowdown in major advanced economies, heightened geopolitical tensions, and possible sustained elevated global commodity prices due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Spending on recreation, travel, and restaurants bounced back in the first half of 2022, with household consumption rising 9.3%, from 0.9% in the first semester of 2021. It was the most significant contributor to GDP growth in the period.

Services output grew 8.7% in the first half, with a broad-based expansion noted across the sector. This contributed to a steady increase in overall employment, with

an additional 5.7 million jobs generated from July 2021 to July 2022, two-thirds of which were in services, mainly in wholesale and retail trade. Infrastructure upgrades, including for bridges, expressways, ports, and railroads, continue to be one of the top priorities of the government. Public spending on infrastructure this year and next is planned at up to 6.0% of GDP to help improve the country's business environment and competitiveness.

Among the government's flagship projects supported by ADB are the Malolos Clark Railway Project and South Commuter Railway Project, both part of the North–South Commuter Railway System, which will provide safe, fast, and efficient transportation to link Metro Manila to northern and southern Luzon provinces. Construction of the Malolos Clark project started during the pandemic, while civil works contracts for the South Commuter project are expected to be awarded soon. ADB is also financing the EDSA Greenways Project, which aims to improve the pedestrian experience along the main EDSA thoroughfare in the capital and the Metro Manila Bridges Project, which seeks to help solve traffic congestion in the metropolis.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 09/21/2022

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## **ADB, UNICEF Partner to Help Baguio City Improve Sanitation Infrastructure and Services**

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have started preparing a Sanitation and Hygiene Behavior Change Communication Strategy and Action Plan to help the Baguio City government improve water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) practices and health awareness in the city. The strategy and action plan is one of the city's initiatives to address water quality and its impacts on health. The evidence-based plan, which will help address the most pressing sanitation and hygiene challenges in the city, is divided into three parts:

Part A aims to improve solid waste management practices.

Part B aims to improve safe and timely fecal sludge emptying practices, improve services, and increase demand from households, businesses, and institutions.

Part C aims to improve WASH and health awareness; and promote hygiene behavior change for COVID-19 infection prevention, control and mitigation, and prevention and response to other water- and sanitation-related health emergencies.

Baguio City has developed its Faecal Sludge Management plan (2021–2050) based on the principle of city-wide inclusive sanitation. It will include developing and testing of the Sanitation and Hygiene Behavior Change Communication Strategy and Action Plan.

Baguio City is known as the “summer capital” of the Philippines and attracts millions of tourists each year. But lack of safe sanitation, such as overflowing septic tanks,

poses a major health and environmental risk in the city. These challenges are compounded by COVID-19, which severely impacted vulnerable communities in the city which have limited access to water, safe sanitation services, and proper hygiene. The grant funding for the project was provided by the Government of Japan through the Japan Fund for Prosperous and Resilient Asia and the Pacific and administered by ADB. ADB has contracted the consortium of Ranas Ltd. and Action Against Hunger, Philippines to support Baguio City to develop the plan.

In partnership with ADB, UNICEF will support Baguio City in implementing the Sanitation and Hygiene Behavior Change Communication Strategy, providing communication materials and technical assistance related to COVID-19 prevention, ending open defecation, proper solid waste disposal and fecal sludge management. UNICEF will also document the campaign experience in Baguio to inform the development of the DoH Playbook on Sustainable Sanitation, which will serve as a guide for other local governments seeking to achieve safely managed sanitation services. UNICEF works in some of the world's toughest places, to reach the world's most disadvantaged children. In more than 190 countries and territories, they work for every child, everywhere, to build a better world for everyone.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 09/21/2022

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## **SINGAPORE: Unemployment Rate Continues Edging Down in Q2**

Singapore's seasonally-adjusted overall unemployment rate edged down from 2.2 percent to 2.1 percent in the second quarter of this year, according to the Labor Market Report Second Quarter 2022 released by the Ministry of Manpower on Wednesday. Meanwhile, the seasonally-adjusted resident unemployment rate fell to 2.8 percent in June from 3 percent in March, and the citizen unemployment rate fell to 3 percent from 3.2 percent. In July 2022, unemployment rates remained steady at pre-COVID levels of 2.1 percent overall, 2.9 percent for residents, and 3 percent for citizens. Singapore's resident long-term unemployment rate, which measures persons who are unemployed for at least 25 weeks, declined to 0.7 percent in June 2022. This is a decline for the third consecutive quarter, and the rate in June is similar to its pre-COVID quarterly average in 2018 and 2019. According to the report, Singapore's total employment, excluding migrant domestic workers, saw a robust growth of 66,500 in the second quarter of 2022, significantly higher than the 42,000 in the first quarter. The growth was supported by greater increases in non-resident employment as the significant easing of border restrictions enabled sectors with a higher share of non-residents to back-fill their positions. The number of job vacancies dipped slightly for the first time in June 2022, following seven consecutive quarters of strong increases. Nonetheless, the seasonally-adjusted level of 126,100 job vacancies in June remained at historically high levels.

From <https://english.news.cn/> 09/14/2022

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## **THAILAND: To Raise Minimum Wage amid Inflation**

The Thai cabinet on Tuesday approved a plan to raise the minimum wage by an average of 5 percent, the first hike since January 2020, in an effort to help workers cope with inflation that hovers at a 14-year high. After the adjustment, effective on Oct. 1, the minimum wage will be divided into nine groups of provinces, ranging from 328 baht (about 9.05 U.S. dollars) to 354 baht (about 9.77 U.S. dollars) per day, according to acting government spokesperson Anucha Burapachaisri. Anucha said the government has considered various factors before making the decision and the increases should not affect the country's economic growth or further stoke inflation. The decision came as the country's consumer inflation growth stood at 7.86 percent year on year in August, the highest level since July 2008, fueled by rising energy prices. The Ministry of Commerce expected the country's inflation to rise within a range of 5.5-6.5 percent this year. On Tuesday, the cabinet also approved extending a diesel price cap for two more months and extend an electricity subsidy program until December to mitigate the impact of high energy prices on living costs, Anucha said.

*From <https://english.news.cn/09/13/2022>*

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## **Vietnam: Maintains Human Development Index Value of 0.703 amid Global Decline - UNDP Report**

Việt Nam's Human Development Index (HDI) value of 0.703 in 2021 remained essentially unchanged from 2019 (0.704), though the nation did climb two places in the global rankings, from 117 to 115. Việt Nam managed to sustain economic growth during the most difficult years of the pandemic, according to the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in Việt Nam. At yesterday's launch of the global 2021/22 Human Development Report (HDR), "Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives: Shaping our Future in a Transforming World", UNDP in Việt Nam reported the country's Gender Inequality Index, which measures the loss of human development due to inequality between males and females, continued to improve in 2021. The country's Global Innovation Index (GII) (considered reproductive health, empowerment and labour force participation) was 0.296, ranking 71 out of 170 countries. The country performed well in terms of maternal mortality, education of girls and female labour force participation, but the representation of women in the parliament remains low. Concerning PHDI, which discounts the HDI for pressures on the planet, Việt Nam is only deducted by 5.8 per cent due to carbon dioxide emissions and material consumption per capita.

However, Việt Nam's small deduction does not mean that the country has done well in reducing CO2 emissions, just that Việt Nam does not have many industries emitting this gas compared to others, according to UNDP in the country's report

yesterday. "Looking ahead, Việt Nam is well placed to regain the loss of momentum resulting from COVID-19 and manage the uncertainties associated with the cascading crises described in the HDR," said Professor Jonathan Pincus, UNDP Senior Economist, at the launch in Hà Nội. "The rapid and universal roll-out of vaccines has enabled life to return to normal and reduced pressure on hospitals, clinics and schools. Government policy has been flexible and adaptive, which has made it possible for industries like tourism and transport to post an impressive recovery in 2022." UNDP also noted that there would be many challenges for Việt Nam in the coming time. Climate change is the biggest, and economic development depends on rising prices worldwide. Three issues, investment, insurance and innovation, are recommended by UNDP experts for the country's development in the current period. Jonathan Pincus said that increasing investment in infrastructure, education, training and research increases national resilience and capacity to adjust quickly and flexibly to changing global conditions. Việt Nam's social protection system must help all citizens to manage economic and natural disaster risks and sustain living standards even during difficult times. The theme of this year's report is the multiple crises facing the world and our collective capacity to mitigate their impact on human development. HDI declined globally for two years in a row, the first time in the 32-year history of the index. Over 90 per cent of countries registered HDI declines either in 2020 or 2021. More than 40 per cent decline in both years, signalling that the crisis is still deepening for many.

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 09/09/2022*

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## **E-Commerce Sector in Dire Need of Qualified Candidates**

The tight supply of qualified candidates in the labour market is a glaring issue facing e-commerce firms, according to insiders. Lê Mai Anh, Vice Chairman of the e-commerce solution provider Smart OSC, said that his firm has 1,000 employees on the payroll and it needs about 500 new ones every year. The firm has relied on campus recruitment to fill its vacancies but to no avail. Few candidates have the adequate skill set for the jobs. It has considered finding new blood elsewhere, such as in India and Sri Lanka. "It's a tough job to recruit qualified staff, especially those who can speak English," he said. The Vietnam E-Commerce and Digital Economy Agency revealed that just 30 per cent of staff in e-commerce solution providers have been trained in e-commerce. The rest have graduated with degrees in other majors, including business administration and information technology. The major-job mismatch indicates that the demand for e-commerce-majored candidates is significant and will grow larger in the next few years. Vũ Thị Minh Tú, Public Relations Manager of the e-commerce platform Lazada, shared this view, saying that the demand for highly-skilled e-commerce candidates is soaring and has surpassed the supply.

The demand-supply imbalance has left firms with no choice but to employ



non-e-commerce-majored candidates, including business administration and marketing, to fill the gap. Trần Mạnh Cường, a human resource specialist at the e-commerce solution provider Sapo, echoed Tú's view, saying that candidates cut out for e-commerce are falling short of demand and this is where non-e-commerce-majored candidates come in. A problem that compounds the situation is that e-commerce graduates themselves normally lack hands-on experience. Firms have to run many training courses to get them ready for their jobs, adding to recruitment costs. Some universities have begun to adapt their curriculum to the situation. Nguyễn Đức Tài, Head of the E-Commerce and Digital Economy Faculty, Đại Nam University, said that the e-commerce curriculum at his university has been designed for practical rather than theoretical knowledge. Under the curriculum, his undergraduates are required to work in a team and create their own products to gain firsthand experience. The experience, he believes, would keep them ready for e-commerce jobs, obviating the need for pre-employment training. Vũ Xuân Nam, Head of the Economic Information System Faculty, Thái Nguyên University, hoped that universities and firms would cooperate more closely to add more practical knowledge to the curriculum. In response, Smart OSC said it is willing to dispatch its specialists to universities to help undergraduates with their training courses, which are expected to equip them with firsthand experience. Nearly 75 per cent of Internet users in Việt Nam go shopping online and nearly 5.5 million users got in on the act during the pandemic, exposing the need for more employment in the sector.

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 09/24/2022*

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## South Asia

### **INDIA: GST Collection Surpasses 1.40 lakh Crore Marks for Six Consecutive Months**

India has collected ₹1,43,612 crore as goods and services tax (GST) in August this year, the finance ministry said. The tax collection which has breached the 1.40 lakh crore mark for six consecutive months, was 28 per cent higher than the amount collected in the same month last year. Out of the overall ₹1.43 lakh crore, the central goods and services tax (CGST) collection stood at ₹24,710 crore while the state goods and services tax (SGST) stood at ₹30,951 crore. The integrated goods and services tax (IGST) remained at ₹77,782 crore which includes ₹42,067 crore collected on the import of goods, the finance ministry said in a statement. The cess collection also brought ₹10,168 crore into its kitty including ₹1,018 crore collected on the import of goods. The E-way bill has also shown healthy numbers. "During the month of July 2022, 7.6 crore e-way bills were generated, which was marginally higher than 7.4 crore in June 2022 and 19% higher than 6.4 crore in June 2021," the ministry said. India's GDP in the first quarter of the fiscal year surged by 13.5 per cent as against a 20.1 per cent growth seen during the same period in 2021, a data released by the National Statistical Office stated. In July, GST revenues stood at

₹1,48,995 crore, the second highest monthly collections since its inception in 2017. The inflation rate has also eased down to its five-month low and currently stands at 6.71 per cent. The economy is slowly recovering and its growth-inflation matrix stands on solid macroeconomic indicators. The auto sales in the country have also crossed the pre-pandemic level despite the massive shortage of semi-conductor in the Indian market. It registered a YoY growth of 11.5 per cent in July which shows there is a renewed demand in the market. The government's cumulative capital expenditure has reached ₹2.1 lakh crore till July which marks 62.5 per cent growth in the corresponding period of last year. According to the Ministry, the manufacturing PMI stood at an eight-month high in July while Services activity also picked up strongly and remained expansionary in the month.

From <https://egov.eletsonline.com> 09/01/2022

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## **Uttar Pradesh Targeting at ODF++ Category by 2025 Under Swachh Bharat Mission**

Uttar Pradesh is now gearing up to achieve the ODF++ category for its villages by 2025, in the second phase of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Rural). The move comes after the state was declared Open Defecation Free (ODF). This was stated by an official spokesperson of the state's Panchayati Raj department. An area can be declared ODF+, if at any point of the day, not a single person is found defecating and/or urinating in the open, and all community and public toilets are functional and well-maintained. Whereas the ODF++ protocol adds the condition that faecal sludge and sewage is safely managed and treated, with no discharging and/or dumping of untreated faecal sludge/septage and sewage in drains, water bodies or open areas. The Yogi Adityanath-led Uttar Pradesh government is making every effort to transform UP's countryside in terms of cleanliness and clean environment – by building personal and community toilets, having a system in place for their regular maintenance, providing sound sludge management and sewage network, ensuring safe disposal of faecal, solid and liquid waste, as well as maintaining regular water supply – in the next four years, said the spokesperson. As the mission is big, the government is also looking at community participation to achieve the goals, said the spokesperson. The objective is to relegate the age-old practice of open defecation to history and script a new chapter in the evolution of UP's villages. The Central government has approved a budget of Rs 2,548 crore for UP for the implementation of Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) phase 2 in financial year 2022-2023, it was stated. So far, the UP government has built 58,059 community toilets, mainly for SC/ST communities as well as migrant workers in phase 2 of the mission, which started in 2020, apart from the 2.18 crore toilets built in the first phase.

All the toilets are being maintained by female members of SHGs that receive a monthly grant of Rs 9,000 from the government for the maintenance of toilets per panchayat. The panchayati raj department has also prepared an action plan to get

an ODF++ grade for 4,723 villages in 2022-23 regarding the management and disposal of solid/liquid waste with community participation. Furthermore, the government has constructed 8.70 lakh toilets for new families and migrant workers, while construction is underway on thousands of others after applications were received through the department's portal. The government has also trained 940 people, including divisional deputy directors, panchayat officials, district officials, masons and sanitation workers, for effective management of sewage networks in villages. The department has also built 24,394 community compost pits and 67,640 community drier pits, in addition to completing the Gobar Dhan-18 project as 7,656 villages have got grade ODF+. In the last five and a half years, Uttar Pradesh has built the highest number of toilets and is also working tirelessly to have a sustainable system for their maintenance, along with a sound faecal, liquid and solid waste management system.

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## **Develop Uttar Pradesh State Capital Region on Lines of Delhi-NCR**

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Friday, conducted a meeting of the Housing and Urban Planning Department, Housing Development Council and all urban development authorities through video conferencing at his official residence and gave necessary instructions. With continuous-coordinated efforts, the state capital Lucknow is today being equipped with state-of-the-art urban facilities in the form of a metropolitan city, he said. "People from different cities want to come here and make it their permanent residence. The population is increasing in the neighbouring districts as well and there are complaints of unplanned development at times. In such a situation, keeping in view the future requirement, an 'Uttar Pradesh State Capital Region' should be formed along the lines of the National Capital Region (NCR)," the chief minister said. "Lucknow as well as Unnao, Sitapur, Rae Bareli, Barabanki, Kanpur Nagar and Kanpur Dehat can be included in this state capital region. After studying and discussing all the dimensions, a detailed action plan should be submitted as soon as possible," he further said. "In the last five years, there has been an unprecedented expansion in the world-class urban infrastructure facilities in Uttar Pradesh with the inspiration of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, be it state-of-the-art urban transport like RRTS and Metro or pure drinking water, development of integrated townships, expressways or waste management system. In every area, the common urban population is experiencing 'Ease of Living'," CM Yogi said. According to the vision of PM Modi, to achieve the goal of a \$1 trillion economy, we will have to increase urbanisation, the chief minister said. "The role of development authorities is very important in ensuring this. They will have to move spontaneously with the help of technology for investment, employment and innovation," he said.

“The situation of the next 50 years should be taken into account while scheduling the development projects. The master plan should contain a complete blueprint of development,” he stated. “Town planners should be posted in every development authority/urban body. Authorities will also have to prioritise doing financial management for their projects on their own. Whether to set up new cities or any other green field project, their planning should be such that commercial activities get encouraged. This will generate income for the Authority, which can be used for the respective project,” CM Yogi said. “With the policy of zero tolerance against the land mafia in the authorities and urban bodies, strictest action will be taken continuously. All authorities and local bodies should ensure that illegal settlements are not formed anywhere. Every colony should have all the necessary facilities,” CM Yogi said. “Work should be done expeditiously on the action plan to develop Ayodhya as a ‘solar city’. This effort will give a unique identity to Ayodhya on the global stage. Cultural mapping of Ramayana tradition should be done. Similarly, action should be taken to get Ramayana galleries constructed on Ram Van Gaman Path,” he said. “Devotees will soon be able to get a new facility of ropeway for the darshan of Radha Rani in Barsana. This important project should be completed by December this year. Similarly, the ropeway to be built from the Cantt railway station to the cathedral in Varanasi will introduce the common man to a unique urban transport system,” CM Yogi said. “Lucknow Green Corridor should be started at the earliest. This will give an attractive look to Lucknow. The scope of the Municipal Corporation of Lucknow should be expanded. Immediate action should be taken for the revitalisation of wetlands in Butler Lake and CG City,” he said.

“Prepare city development plans for Lucknow, Kanpur, Gorakhpur, Moradabad, Saharanpur, Jhansi, Mathura, Bareilly, Meerut, Agra, Chitrakoot, Varanasi, Prayagraj. There should be no delay in preparing the urban logistics plan for Ghaziabad, Prayagraj, Agra, Lucknow, Kanpur, Varanasi and Meerut under the Leeds – 2021 policy,” he further said. “In view of the importance of capital Lucknow, there is a need to establish a well-equipped ‘Convention Centre’ here. The convention centre should be such that it can host world-class events. A necessary proposal should be prepared in this regard while deciding the land selection, draft, etc. with a target of at least 35 acres of huge campus,” he said. “The utility of Avadh Shilpgram needs to be increased. Useful exhibitions should be organized here at fortnightly intervals for the general public like MSME, skill development, and Hunar Haat. Awas Vikas Parishad should try to make Avadh Shilpgram and Kakori Shaheed Smriti Udyan more attractive with dynamic facade lighting,” the chief minister said. “The government is determined to provide all the urban facilities according to the modern scale keeping in view the needs of the future along with preserving the ancient culture and civilisation in Ayodhya. Every project for the overall development of Ayodhya, prepared according to the sentiments of the Prime Minister, is the priority of the government,” he said.

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## **CM Mann Approves Ultra-modern Township Under Mohali Master Plan to Provide Affordable Housing**

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Monday gave a go ahead for setting up an ultra-modern new township in Mohali master plan. A decision to this effect was taken by the CM while chairing a high-level meeting on Urban Development here at his residence. The CM said that it is the need of the hour to develop this township for providing affordable housing facilities to the people in the Tricity. He asked the officers of the Urban Development department and Greater Mohali Area Development Authority (GMADA) to conceptualise and come up with a concrete proposal on this matter. Bhagwant Mann said that the proposed township should be equipped with world-class facilities to ensure that people can live comfortably. He further said that the township should be a perfect blend of comfort, elegance, and luxury, along with all safety measures including fire fighting and others for giving best of the residential services to people. Bhagwant Mann laid special thrust on developing this township on ultra-modern lines so that it could emerge as a hub of information and technology along with that of higher education. Likewise, he said that a part of the township should also be developed as industrial township so that the captains of industry from across the country can be invited for investing here. The CM said that as Mohali has best of the class road, air and rail connectivity, so this purposed township in its vicinity has a huge potential for growth and progress. He also asked the officers to explore the feasibility of shifting the upcoming Medical college at Mohali on a new stretch of land. Bhagwant Mann said that the state government is committed to the overall development of the state and prosperity of its people.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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: 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.

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## **Uttar Pradesh to Have Ultra Modern Bus Stands in 18 Cities**

The Yogi government, in its second stint, is taking forward its work of the first regime to make state-of-the-art bus stands which will offer improved and better facilities to bus passengers. In order to develop bus stands with modern resources, the transport department is working on an action plan to develop 18 bus stands on the PPP model. This is an important step towards improving passenger amenities. The process of e-tendering for the construction of bus stands will be started soon. In this regard, in view of the suggestions of the bidders, a proposal will be prepared and sent for the permission of the government soon. Tenders will be invited for this as soon as permission is received from the government. Kaushambi (Ghaziabad), Kanpur Central, Varanasi Cantt, Civil Lines (Prayagraj), Vibhutikhand Gomtinagar (Lucknow), Meerut, Transport Nagar (Agra), Idag (Agra), Agra Fort (Agra), Aligarh, Mathura (Old) on PPP model. 18 bus stands including Ghaziabad, Gorakhpur, Charbagh Bus Station, Zero Road Depot (Prayagraj), Amausi (Lucknow), Sahibabad, and Ayodhya will be developed. All these bus stands to be built on the PPP model will have high-level passenger facilities and will be made of quality.

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## **DigiThane: A Thane Smart City Exclusive!**

Thane Municipal Corporation is creating awareness, training their internal staff, looking at privacy and security; improving ICT infrastructure, operations & maintenance; identifying industry benchmarks, and adopting best practices, etc. which are undertaken by the organisation. Puja Banerjee from Elets Technomedia in conversation with Sandeep Malvi, Additional Municipal Commissioner, Thane Municipal Corporation & CEO, Thane Smart City Limited, Government of Maharashtra. What are the types of challenges you face while executing e-Governance initiatives? How are you planning to resolve these issues? The emergence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has provided means for faster and better communication, retrieval of data and utilisation of information for the citizens. E-governance is the application of ICT to provide government services to the citizens through the internet. However, in developing countries like India, where literacy levels are still low and a significant number of people live below the poverty line, people are not aware about the benefits of

e-Governance activities and most of them don't even use ICT to much extent. With the context of Thane city, we face several challenges time and again, while executing e-Governance initiatives, majorly revolving around environmental and social challenges, economic challenges and technical challenges. However, these challenges pave a path for us to work tirelessly in addressing each of these challenges so as to ensure great public service delivery and ultimately contribute towards making the life of citizens better in Thane.

One of the most important areas where we focus on, includes designing e-Governance initiatives, which are close to the reality of the city situation. There is a holistic plan which we undertake while finalising e-Governance projects or initiatives which include the following: First, by evaluating e-readiness, to have a detailed understanding about the readiness of the city to implement projects/initiatives. Secondly, determining the objectives of the e-Governance project/initiative, trying to involve the public to express their ideas and opinions about their expectations and what they want from the project. One important aspect we also look at, is scalability for future growth. The Smart City concept integrates ICT, and various physical devices connected to the IoT network to optimise the efficiency of city operations and services and connect to citizens. What initiatives has Thane Smart City taken on this front? Thane has taken various initiatives with respect to the advancements in technology while ICT, and various physical devices connected to the IoT network to optimise the efficiency of city operations and services and connect to citizens. Thane Smart City is a developed urban area that creates sustainable economic development and high quality of life by excelling in multiple key areas; economy, mobility, environment, people, living, and government. Thane Municipal Corporation is implementing Universal Smart Metering where Smart Water Metres will be installed across the city connections to reduce Non-Revenue Water (NRW) considerably, and the water consumption and application of water charges is based on the effective water consumption by the consumer. It also supports a WiFi enabled mobile application enabling the integration of Automated Metre Reading (AMR) and billing remotely with accuracy. It helps to collect accurate billing data of water consumers to track their exact water usage by following a pay-as-you-use system.

By implementing 100% Smart Metering, TMC/TSCCL can conduct water audit and systematic leakage detection and repair activity to bring down the level of NRW in the distribution system to the desired level of 15%. The benefits of Smart Water Metre include reduction in illegal connections, providing billing efficiency & accuracy, and enabling increased revenue for TMC. Water metres with IoT help to reduce water losses in the entire water distribution network and allow utilities to track and manage citizen demand for water. The Intelligent Transport System (ITS) for Thane Municipal Transport Undertaking (TMTU) fleet of buses is an innovative and transformational initiative taken by TMC and TMTU to introduce transparent citizen friendly services that will enhance citizens' experience in using TMTU bus services and encourage them to avail this form of public transport, thereby impacting

positively on the carbon footprint and traffic congestion issues in and around Thane. The ITS will also allow TMTU to improve operational efficiency and effectively manage their fleet. Under ITS, GPS devices have been installed in 350 buses to enhance citizen safety through real-time live tracking. ITS benefits the citizens by improving the overall quality of life of the residents and the visitors; providing a connected ecosystem of buses, passengers, bus stops, depots, control room operators and management with the purpose of providing safe, hassle-free, and transparent services to citizens, enabling efficient management, and monitoring and analysing the operations of the bus fleet.

Another fantastic project at Thane is ICCC (Integrated Command and Control Centre). ICCC has been set up in the TMC room to provide updates and alerts to citizens and key agencies for event planning, crowd monitoring and disaster response. ICCC is envisaged as a centralised Integrated Data Centre and Command and Control Room, which can be used for all citizen-centric services/processes including their safety, protection and policing. DigiThane is a major e-Governance initiative of Thane Smart City. Please shed some light on this initiative. DigiThane is a one-stop-shop for municipal and merchant services for all citizens of Thane. Before implementation of the DigiThane project, Thane Municipality faced many challenges with respect to lack of data about need & preferences, owing to low citizen interactions. It affected planning, execution, and monitoring of projects with low involvement of the ultimate beneficiaries, the citizens. DigiThane, the solution deployed, comprises Digital Assets (Mobile app, website, SMS, merchant portal and app, social media, SMS, emails) and Citizen Engagement Operations Team (managing content, merchant ecosystem, analytics, helpdesk & registration). The main services provided by the TMC through DigiThane platform consist of enhanced municipal services, targeted information, citizen engagement, integration with third party applications, and various other G2C, B2C, C2C services are provided through the platform. It is an integrated and unified platform for all smart city applications and one point access to all municipal services and bill payments for citizens. So far, the DigiThane platform has registered more than 2,86,000 users. More than 9.1 crore one-way communications and 2.9 crore two-way communications have been received from more than 240 surveys that have been conducted. About 17,000 citizens interact with the municipality everyday through the DigiThane platform. With respect to property tax payment, 20 crore tax was collected by 20,000 people in FY2019-20, and 21 crore tax payment was collected in FY 2020- 21, filed by approx. 17,500 people. DigiThane has been a pioneer project in bridging the gap between the corporation and the citizens by achieving increased public engagement, enhanced municipal services and improved service delivery.

The platform has been nominated for several awards & recognitions: Won 2nd spot in Governance category at India Smart Cities Award Contest (ISAC 2020), Best Digital City Application Award from NIUA, MoHUA (GoI), January 2020, Smart Cities Mission recommended entry for Smart City World Congress 2019, Best Smart City

Application Award (Business World 7th Smart City Conclave 2019), Gold Category Award for citizen centric governance (SKOCH), October 2019, etc. Recently, the DigiThane project won the SKOCH 2021 “Gold” award in the Municipal Governance category from the SKOCH group. What are the best practices? Making progress on citizens’ biggest problems requires city administration to make better use of data, involve citizens, invest in resources, and collaborate with stakeholders across different sectors. There are various best practices and innovative aspects of the projects at Thane Smart City. A few instances of those are: With the increase in positive COVID cases in Thane, the administration followed lockdown with curvature. In case of a lockdown in the city, the administration was assured of full cooperation to meet the daily needs of the people so that no panic situation is formed in the city. To overcome the pandemic, Thane Smart City Limited integrated the Health state helpline with the ICCC. This helped us in tackling the challenges faced due to the COVID pandemic and its underlying implications like lockdown, etc; setup of COVID war room which monitors real time monitoring of ambulance and hospital beds; COVID data analysis and status report preparation; implemented solutions for real time monitoring of water-logging contributing to improvement of city’s health and its infrastructure; distance analytics and crowd analytics features of VA have been used during COVID lockdown.

During COVID, the TMTU bus services were curtailed and very limited services were operational to help movement of staff working for the essential services. The ITS system was helpful in tackling the pandemic situation. Few of the GPS-enabled buses of TMTU were converted into ambulances to cater to the urgent need of ambulances in and around Thane city. Solid Waste Management department vehicles were integrated into the ITS system for live monitoring of garbage disposal. What is the future plan of Thane Smart City? Thane aims to be a truly global city by being smart as well as a sustainable city. We at TMC (Thane Municipal Corporation), have a vision of making Thane an innovative city that uses ICTs and other means to improve quality of life, efficiency of urban operation and services and competitiveness, while ensuring that it meets the needs of present and future generations with respect to economic, social and environmental aspects. We plan to work across and bring about major developments in various sectors namely: transportation, infrastructure, communications, technology, economic services, urban planning and electricity, etc. moving forward. Your views on Digital India and its future? I truly believe India is leading the world in building the foundation for a strong and scalable digital economy. Today we have 1.18 billion mobile connections, 700 million Internet users, and 600 million smartphones, which are increasing by 25 million per quarter. Digital India initiative by the Government of India has been a flagship initiative in transforming India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. It was launched in July 2015 by Honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to ensure the Government’s services are made available to citizens electronically by improved online infrastructure and by increasing internet connectivity or making the country digitally empowered in the field of technology. The

initiative includes plans to connect rural areas with high-speed internet networks. Digital India initiative consists of three core components: Development of secure and stable digital infrastructure, delivering government services digitally, and universal digital literacy.

It is interesting to see the variety of responses you get when you ask a group of people what 'Digital India' means to them. For some people, it is about the increasing ease of use for various services, including government facilities, UPI payments, Direct Benefit Transfers through Aadhaar, CoWin for vaccination, etc., while for some it is about Indian tech Startups—Zomato, Ola, Urban Company, etc, that are redefining how we consume goods or services. For some, it's the legendary tech services companies – TCS, Infosys and the like, that have built India's mammoth \$200 billion tech sector and for many, it is the power of social media and how it's giving every Indian a voice. In the last 75 years, India has made a remarkable jump to become a robust digital economy. How well we can integrate digital solutions across platforms will define the future of our country. By the 100th year of our independence, a lot more can be achieved, for which we must strive towards developing a seamless, transparent, and inclusive digital ecosystem which is driven by India's world-class innovation capabilities. The next few years will be decisive for India's potential to stimulate employment and get back to being one of the world's fastest-growing large economies.

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## Central-West Asia

### **AZERBAIJAN: Carrier Plans to Commission Wi-Fi Service on Regular Bus Routes**

Free Internet access has been provided on regular bus routes No. 18, 65 and 85 of the carrier Xalig Faigoglu LLC, Trend reports via press secretary of Xalig Faigoglu LLC Nizam Rzayev. According to him, Wi-Fi service is available on regular bus routes No. 18, 65 and 85. "It's planned to commission this service on other routes in the near future," Rzayev said. Such service has been commissioned on regular routes of BakuBus LLC.

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### **Azerbaijan to Develop Local Cybersecurity Solutions**

The state structures of Azerbaijan are taking active measures to ensure the protection of the population from cyber attacks, a representative of the State Service for Special Communications and Information Security Azer Ahadov said during an event on 'Cyber-secure economy: reforms, innovative approaches and solutions',

Trend reports. According to Ahadov, the most advanced technologies are used in Azerbaijan to ensure cybersecurity. "Our companies are cooperating with foreign companies to develop local solutions," he noted.

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## **Azerbaijan to Further Cooperate with International Telecommunication Union for ICT Development**

Azerbaijan will further cooperate with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to enhance intercountry dialogue in information and communication, Minister of Digital Development and Transport of Azerbaijan Rashad Nabiyeu tweeted, Trend reports. According to him, Azerbaijan has been the Union's member since 1992, and an active member since 2014. "At the regular ITU conference, I briefed my colleagues on digital transformation projects implemented in Azerbaijan. We will continue to collaborate with the mentioned high ranked company to expand the intercountry ICT dialogue," Nabiyeu wrote. As the minister noted, building a creative and innovative society in Azerbaijan is possible only through digital transformation. "We're currently developing a number of government programs for digital transformation advancement. The ministry is working on the country's broadband infrastructure investment, as well as implementing national projects via GPON and LTE technologies. Moreover, Azerbaijan is the initiator of establishing Trans-Caspian fiber-optic cable line under the Caspian Sea at the regional level. The project participants are Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan. Implementing the relevant initiative will pave the way for expanded digital services in the countries of the South Caucasus, the Middle East, Central and South Asia," he stated.

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## **Azerbaijan Actively Cooperating with EU in IT Sector Development**

Azerbaijan is the most active participant in the Eastern Partnership program of the European Union (EU), Acting President of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences (ANAS) Arif Hashimov said during the 5th conference on electronic infrastructures of the Eastern Partnership, Trend reports. According to Hashimov, the ongoing reforms in Azerbaijan create the basis for further development of the information technology sector. "Since 2000, Azerbaijan and the EU have begun cooperation in various sectors of the IT sector. A commission has also been established for the integration of the electronic infrastructure of Azerbaijan with the EU. Since 2009, the EU has launched the Eastern Partnership program, which includes a number of states, including Azerbaijan. Our country is one of the most active participants in this initiative," he noted. Hashimov stressed that Azerbaijan has achieved great success in the field of integration of both information technology and

science and education. "We established close cooperation with various laboratories and scientific centers in Europe. ANAS continues to develop cooperation with the EU countries and we have a number of agreements," the academician further said. Besides, Hashimov emphasized that the parties are also cooperating in the areas of developing electronic services, cybersecurity, and the Fourth Industrial Revolution. "In these areas, we have prepared relevant state programs, including programs for the digitalization of science and education, the creation of new electronic platforms, and a number of others," he added.

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## **Azerbaijan Can Become Digital Hub of Region - Deputy Minister of Digital Development and Transport**

Azerbaijan can become a digital hub of the region, Deputy Minister of Digital Development and Transport Samir Mammadov said during the 5th conference on electronic infrastructures of the Eastern Partnership, Trend reports. According to Mammadov, large-scale work is underway in the country to develop information technologies, 'green' technologies and economy. "These projects are also being implemented in the liberated territories of Azerbaijan. We are working on a project to cover the entire country with internet access until 2024, develop 'cloud technologies' and a national electronic signature," the deputy minister noted. "Our country is also participating in regional projects. So, together with Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, we are laying fiber optic cables along the bottom of the Caspian Sea. The implementation of all these initiatives will help turn Azerbaijan into a digital hub of our region." He also noted that great attention is paid to the development of human capital. "This year, we have trained 800 IT specialists, and it's planned to increase this number to 2,000 next year. We are also expanding training programs in the IT field," added Mammadov.

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## **Azerbaijan Interested in Studying EU Strategy for Digital Development Until 2030**

Azerbaijan has no problems with internet access, Vice President of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences (ANAS) Rasim Aliguliyev said during the 5th conference on electronic infrastructures of the Eastern Partnership, Trend reports. "We have our own space satellites, appropriate personnel potential, and specialists," he noted. The vice president also mentioned the issue of access to some international scientific platforms, noting the need to create an appropriate electronic education, an electronic library, and train specialists in this industry. "We see the need for integration and cooperation on these issues with the EU countries. European institutions achieved great success in these areas," Aliguliyev added. He

pointed out that the EU adopted a digital development strategy until 2030. "We are studying this strategy and are interested in exchanging experience on the initiatives being implemented in European countries. This will help speed up the development of science and education, including creation of appropriate platforms in Azerbaijan," he stressed.

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## **Azerbaijan Names Number of Residents of Local Economic Zones**

A total of 108 residents of economic zones have been registered in Azerbaijan, and 60 of them started their activities, the head of department of the Azerbaijani Agency for the Development of Economic Zones Emil Hajiyev said during an event on 'Modern methods and technological development of industry: Industrial zones and agricultural parks', Trend reports. According to Hajiyev, several more residents of economic zones are expected to start operating this year. "In the first half of 2022, they manufactured products worth \$768 million and exported \$320 million. Totally, over the entire past period, the residents exported products worth more than \$1.5 billion. Besides, nearly 15 percent of manufactured non-oil products falls on economic zones, and their share in total exports is about 35 percent," he noted. He also noted that two economic zones - the Aghdam Industrial Park and the Araz Valley Economic Zone were created in Azerbaijan's Karabakh region. "As to date, they have been completely cleared of mines, and the appropriate infrastructure has been created. Construction of two 110/35 kV transformers and about 20 less power is expected. Totally, nine residents and two non-residents have been registered in the Aghdam Industrial Park. One resident and one non-resident have been registered in the Araz Valley Economic Zone so far," the agency's representative further said. According to him, the geographical location of the mentioned economic zone allows turning Karabakh into a logistics center. "Residents of economic zones can benefit preferential loans. They are issued at a five percent annual rate in the amount of five million manat (\$2.9 million) to 10 million manat (\$5.8 million) for up to 10 years," added Hajiyev.

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## **Azerbaijan Reveals Number of Rent-to-Own Apartments**

As many as 2,449 citizens improve their living conditions as part of the rent-to-own system, Head of Mortgage Loans Department of Azerbaijani Mortgage and Credit Guarantee Fund Rasim Abdullayev said during media training, Trend reports. "As of September 27, the Fund has offered business loan guarantees and subsidies in the amount of 320.7 million manat (\$188.8 million). A total of 40,438 borrowers in 50 regions were issued 2.85 billion manat (\$1.6 billion) of mortgage loans," he said. The



Mortgage and Credit Guarantee Fund was established following the Presidential Decree in 2017 through the reorganization and merger of Azerbaijan Mortgage Fund OJSC and Azerbaijan Credit Guarantee Fund OJSC.

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## **IRAN: Could Introduce Internet Restrictions Due to Security Issues**

Some restrictions on the internet may be imposed in Iran by security services due to recent incidents in the country, Iranian Minister of Information and Communications Technology Isa Zarepour told reporters, Trend reports referring to ISNA. According to Zarepour, such decisions may be made by the security services in some cases. "So far, no steps have been taken to slow down the Internet speed in Iran. The bandwidth of the country is provided at the appropriate level by the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology of Iran," the minister said. As of September 19, a number of protests have been held in several cities of Iran. The protests were prompted by the murder of 22-year-old Iranian woman Mahsa Amini by Tehran's morality police. As previously reported, the girl was beaten while in custody for allegedly violating strict hijab rules. Hijab was made mandatory for women in Iran shortly after the country's 1979 revolution. Women who break the strict dress code risk being arrested by Iran's morality police. Based on the dress code, women are required to fully cover their hair in public and wear long, loose-fitting clothes.

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## **KAZAKHSTAN: Mastercard Actively Participates in Developing New Digital Products**

Mastercard is actively participating in developing and introducing new digital products in Kazakhstan, General Manager Central Asia at Mastercard Rafal Trepka told Trend. According to him, with direct participation of the company, Apple Pay, Samsung Pay and Google pay systems became available in Kazakhstan - these were the most important steps towards the digital future, which helped even more people in Kazakhstan to get the opportunity to choose the most convenient payment method. "These services make it possible to use bank cards anytime and any place thanks to the Mastercard Digital Enablement Service (MDES). All Mastercard transactions, made using a smartphone or any other device, are protected with payment tokens. Tokens are one-time combinations of digits that are used on mobile devices instead of 16-digit numbers on plastic cards. The use of tokens allows Mastercard to provide a secure and convenient payment method," Trepka said.

He noted that recently the company launched 'Pay in motion with Mastercard' campaign with banks partners (Halyk Bank, Altyn Bank, Jusan Bank, Forte Bank,

Freedom Finance Bank of Kazakhstan and Eurasian Bank), within which Mastercard cardholders get a chance to win 1 million tenge (\$2,177). In order to do this, cardholder must pay for purchase using Apple Pay, Samsung Pay and Google Pay with a smartphone or other device (for example, a watch) in the amount of 3,000 tenge (\$6) each. The drawing of million tenge is held weekly in each of the participating banks. "Mastercard takes an active part in the development and introduction of new digital products that help small and medium-sized businesses become active participants in e-commerce. For example, in cooperation with partner banks, 'Tap on Phone' technology has been introduced, when an ordinary smartphone becomes a full-fledged Point of Sale (POS) terminal for accepting contactless payments by bank cards and other devices," he stated. According to Trepka such products were launched by a number of Kazakh banks.

This is very convenient for accepting cashless payments in places where previously payment was required only in cash - taxi, small shops, markets, hairdressers, shoe and clothing repair shops, flower and newspaper kiosks, etc. Cooperation with banks on the implementation of 'Tap on Phone' opens up even more opportunities for the widespread use of cashless and contactless payments. "Mastercard is actively helping their partner banks in introducing projects, that were developed by startups. Mastercard together with the Ministry of Trade and Integration of Kazakhstan and other partners is also conducting educational webinars for small and medium business from large international companies, with extensive and diverse experience in such areas as Internet marketing, e-commerce, electronic payments, accounting, management cash flows, etc. in order to develop e-commerce in Kazakhstan," Trepka noted.

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## Oceania

### **NEW ZEALAND: Investments – Super Fund Active Strategies Buffer Difficult Year in Markets**

As at 30 June 2022 the Fund stood at \$55.7 billion, down from approximately \$59 billion at the end of the previous financial year (-6.99%)\* However, the Fund significantly out-performed its passive Reference Portfolio benchmark by 7.25%, generating a record \$4.5 billion in value add – considerably reducing the impact of the broad market downturn The downturn in global markets has seen the value of the NZ Super Fund reduce by \$3.3 billion in the 12 months to 30 June 2022. However, a successful year for its active investment strategies cushioned the overall impact by delivering record value-added returns, says CEO Matt Whineray. "It might sound counter-intuitive to say we had a strong year with the drop in value of the Fund," says Mr Whineray. "However, our active investment strategies have performed extremely well and are a reflection of the excellent work and skill of the team over many years.

The passively-invested Reference Portfolio, which sets the overall portfolio risk target and makes up approximately 60 percent of the Fund, returned -14.24 percent in the 2021/22 financial year. It is an index made up of 80 percent equities and 20 percent fixed income. The Guardians' active management saw the Fund significantly out-perform this passive Reference Portfolio benchmark by 7.25 percent, earning a record \$4.5 billion in value add. "This represents significant real value to New Zealand. While there is no hiding that market conditions are challenging – the first six months of 2022 have seen the worst global equity market performance since 1970 – the Fund showed resilience and is performing well," says Mr Whineray. As at 30 June 2022 the Fund stood at \$55.7 billion, down from approximately \$59 billion at the end of the previous financial year. Government contributions (net of NZ tax) since inception have been \$12.6 billion.

In the last 10 years, the Fund has generated returns of more than 12 percent per annum. Since investing began in 2003 the Fund has returned 9.65 percent per annum, equating to \$34.6 billion more than the cost of Treasury Bills (what the Government would have saved if it simply paid down debt). The value added by active investment since inception represents \$13.3 billion. Mr Whineray credited the Guardians' strategic tilting, timber, global macro, tactical credit and equity factors mandates with contributing to the strong value-add performance. "Our Strategic Tilting strategy continues to perform above expectations and deliver strong value, with returns in 2021/22 largely driven by higher bond yields as central banks hiked interest rates in response to inflation." "Timber also continues to outperform, headlined by our investment in Kaingaroa Timberlands, a radiata pine forest in the central North Island of New Zealand."

"Our global macro opportunity, a hedge fund strategy that bases its holdings primarily on the overall economic and political views of various countries or their macroeconomic principles, and our internally managed tactical credit mandate, also delivered strong returns. Tactical credit investments provide debt funding while using downside protection to mitigate or prevent a decrease in the value of an investment." "Equity factors investments in developed markets had a very strong year, reversing prior under-performance. Factor-based investing is a long-term strategy that uses a range of criteria – such as value, quality, momentum and low risk factors – in an effort to out-perform traditional equity benchmarks, while taking lower levels of risk. An allocation to the "value" factor, which had historically weighed negatively on performance, started to reverse in late 2021, after global equity markets began to pull back after reaching all-time highs."

"The external economic environment continues to present challenges to investors. Heightened inflation, and the associated response by central banks to push up interest rates to suppress demand, places considerable pressure on investment returns for both bonds and equities," says Mr Whineray. "The periods of

extraordinarily high returns, like 2020-2021 when the Fund returned 29 percent, are behind us. In effect we were bringing forward future returns in an environment which combined both monetary and fiscal stimulus.” “Higher interest rates both weigh on market performance and increase our internal hurdles for making direct investments in companies. We believe we’re entering a lower return period, but remain confident our long-term approach will continue to deliver value to New Zealand.” In the two months since the end of the 2022 financial year the size of the Fund has recovered by approximately \$2 billion to \$57.3 billion.

“We expect this market volatility to continue. Stakeholders should expect to see further ups and downs going forward. As a long-term investor the Fund is well-positioned for this sort of market,” says Mr Whineray. \*All figures are after costs and before New Zealand tax and are provided on a provisional, unaudited basis. The Guardians of New Zealand Superannuation 2021-2022 annual report and audited financial statements will be released in late October. About NZ Super Fund The \$57 billion NZ Super Fund is a global investment fund that was established by the New Zealand Government to help pre-fund universal superannuation. A long-term, growth-oriented investor, the Fund has returned 10% p.a. since inception in 2003, and currently has more than \$6 billion invested in New Zealand, including significant stakes in Kaingaroa Timberlands, Datacom, Kiwibank, Fidelity Life and NZ Gourmet, as well as significant investment in a range of locally listed companies.

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## **Economy Grows as Tourism and Exports Rebound**

The economy has rebounded strongly in the June quarter as the easing of restrictions and reopening of the border boosted economic activity, meaning New Zealand is well placed to meet the next set of challenges confronting the global economy. GDP rose 1.7 percent in the June quarter following a decline of 0.2 percent in the previous March quarter. Forecasts from economists had ranged from 0 to 1.8 percent, reflecting the volatility in the economic data recently. The economy is nearly 5 percent bigger than before the start of the pandemic, similar to Australia and ahead of the US, EU, UK and Canada. “This is a positive result and underlines the resilience of the economy. Our strong growth in the June quarter comes at a time the IMF estimated that global output shrank,” Grant Robertson said.

“We’re targeting investment to give New Zealanders greater economic security. Our economic plan is working in what continues to be an extremely challenging global environment. More people are in work, wages are outpacing inflation and our economy is stronger than it was before the pandemic started, while the Government’s books are in good shape. On an annual basis, economic activity was 1 percent higher than the previous year. The size of the economy was \$360 billion. “The services sector, which makes up two-thirds of the economy, rose 2.7 percent as New

Zealanders and returning overseas visitors spent more on transport, accommodation, eating out and sports and recreational activities. Exports jumped 20.5 percent, boosted by the return of tourists.

“As we move into this new phase and away from the emergency Covid-19 settings, our economy is 5 percent larger than it was before the start of the pandemic. This means we are well placed to hit the ground running and take the opportunities available to New Zealand’s economy from our strong pandemic response. “New Zealand is well positioned to respond to the challenges ahead. The global economic outlook is being revised downwards as high inflation, the war in Ukraine and ongoing pandemic-related disruptions continue to affect the countries we trade with. “We are not immune to what happens beyond our borders, but we start on the front foot and with optimism. We produce goods and services that the world demands and our ongoing investment a low carbon future reduces our reliance on volatile global energy markets and attracts people and investment.

“We are continuing to focus on lifting New Zealanders up and giving them greater economic security. We are investing in supporting businesses to grow jobs and wages which will make families and our economy stronger. “We are also prepared for what the world may throw at us and continuing to prioritise our spending and investing where it is needed most. We are keeping a lid on debt and making important investments in our future to deliver a high wage, low emissions economy that provides greater security in good times and bad. Some tough choices, however, may be required as we navigate our way through a volatile and uncertain global environment,” Grant Robertson said.

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## **50,000 More Kids to Benefit from Equity-Based Programmes Next Year**

Another 47,000 students will be able to access additional support through the school donations scheme, and a further 3,000 kids will be able to get free and healthy school lunches as a result of the Equity Index. That’s on top of nearly 90% of schools that will also see a bump in funding when schools start receiving equity funding based on the Equity Index rather than the old decile system. “The Government is delivering on its promise to introduce an Equity Index, which makes sure the right support is going to the schools and students who need it,” Education Minister Chris Hipkins said. “Alongside the resulting changes to the school donations scheme and healthy school lunches, up to \$90 million in additional funding and support is going directly to schools and kura next year.

“What the Equity Index does is give us a much better picture based on much better data of which students need extra resources, and because of that we’re able to

invest more in the right places. “Schools and kura in Te Tai Tokerau have the biggest average increase of around \$223.11 per pupil. At the other end schools and kura in Auckland will receive an average increase of \$6.25 extra per pupil, an increase that reflects the incredible diversity in the city. “Schools in South Auckland for example will receive on average \$525.47 per pupil after the changes, representing an average increase of \$70.47. This compares to schools in the north of Auckland who’ll receive on average \$60.77 per pupil for an average increase of \$16.60,” Chris Hipkins said.

“We are also increasing the amount of money the Government contributes through the school donations policy, as well as expanding the number of schools that are eligible,” Associate Education Minister Jan Tinetti said. “School donations will increase from \$150 to \$154.13 per student in 2023. Combined with the expansion in eligibility, this will result in up to in \$9.3 million in extra funding provided directly to schools next year. If those schools and kura join the scheme the families and whānau of around 47,000 young people at 155 schools will no longer be asked for donations. “The changes will also see a further 24 schools and kura invited to join the Ka Ora, Ka Ako Healthy School Lunches programme. Meaning approximately 3,000 additional children will be eligible to receive free, healthy lunches at school.

“The aims of the Equity Index and the extension of support through these two programmes are further evidence that this Government is putting the wellbeing of children and families at the heart of our work, and are helping to make everyday life more affordable for parents,” Jan Tinetti said. Notes for editors: Schools and kura with an EQI number of 432 and above will be eligible to join the School Donations Scheme. 155 schools and kura with approx. 46,986 ākonga are newly eligible to join the scheme. Previously eligible schools with an EQI number below 432 will retain their eligibility so long as they continue to opt-in. 24 additional schools with approx. 3,176 ākonga will be invited to join Ka Ora, Ka Ako Healthy School Lunches programme. \*These counts include four schools who are newly eligible for both schemes. The Government increased equity funding by 50% – which is \$75 million a year – through Budget 2022. The analysis that is referenced in this PR excludes schools and kura with a notional Equity Index number. These include Teen Parent Units, Activity centres, and some special schools as including them would overestimate the impacts for most schools and kura.

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## **Healthy Active Learning Now in 40 Percent of Schools Across New Zealand**

A total of 800 schools and kura nationwide are now benefitting from a physical activity and nutrition initiative aimed at improving the wellbeing of children and young people. Healthy Active Learning was funded for the first time in the inaugural Wellbeing Budget and was launched in 2020. It gets regional sports trusts, regional

education offices, and public health units to work together to support schools to implement healthy eating and drinking, and quality physical activity programmes. The initiative has more than doubled in size in just two years – expanding from 300 schools in 2020 to 800 in 2022. “Healthy Active Learning is our Wellbeing approach in action. The expansion demonstrates the positive impacts the initiative is having for schools and communities,” Grant Robertson said. “Being part of Healthy Active Learning is voluntary, and it’s been so encouraging to see so many schools embrace the initiative and its benefits.”

Recent evaluation findings show Healthy Active Learning has significantly increased the priority teachers place on Health and Physical Education as a learning area with more teachers also integrating it with other parts of the curriculum. They also show schools and kura are providing physical activity experiences that are more inclusive, and consider the needs, of all students. “This shows the initiative is supporting healthy and active school environments by helping teachers feel confident and well equipped to teach children across the health and physical education and hauora curriculum,” Chris Hipkins said. The initiative also includes a health promotion workforce providing direct support to schools. The Government has invested \$47.6 million into the Healthy Active Learning initiative between 2020 and 2024 and has recently committed a further \$13.4 million in funding to support the ongoing delivery of this initiative beyond 2024. It is being delivered at no cost to education providers.

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### **3000 More RSE Workers to Ease Workforce Pressures**

The Government continues to respond to global workforce shortages by announcing the largest increase in over a decade to the Recognised Seasonal Employer Scheme (RSE), providing 3000 additional places, Immigration Minister Michael Wood and Agriculture Minister Damien O’Connor have announced. The new RSE cap will allow access to 19,000 workers annually from participating Pacific countries, providing workforce relief to the horticulture and wine sector. “The additional 3,000 places, is a 19 percent increase on the previous season, and acknowledges the industry’s current needs based on strong growth, and the lower number of working holiday makers onshore right now,” Michael Wood said. “We are listening to industry, and worked closely with horticulture and wine sectors to ensure we strike the right balance by incentivising local employment, bringing in further additional workers, and also requiring working conditions to be improved.

Damien O’Connor said the decision is part of a balanced programme to lift export earnings and provide economic security for New Zealand. “Agriculture exports earned a record \$53billion last year, and it’s critical to our recovery that we have the workforce to continue maximising production and earnings,” Damien O’Connor said “We’ve been working with the sector and making good progress on growing a local

workforce, with nearly 10,000 New Zealanders attracted into food and fibre jobs over the past few years through our 'Opportunity Grows Here' campaign, and primary sector workforce programme. "The RSE scheme is not designed to completely fill all roles in the horticulture and viticulture industries. This cap maintains pressure on RSE employers to continue recruiting New Zealanders where possible, improve pay and conditions for workers, and invest in automation," Damien O'Connor said.

"Additionally, over the last year we've received over 30,499 Working Holiday applications, and numbers are continuing to rise. With over 6,200 Working Holiday makers in country, double the number we had in October 2021, we remain confident that further relief to the workforce shortages will come as we approach summer," Michael Wood said. The new cap was settled on a tri-partite basis for the first time ever, with both employer groups and unions at the table, enabling a discussion about both the number of workers, and how we can ensure good employment practices. In setting the cap, the Government has also taken into consideration concerns expressed about working conditions from RSE workers. "The wellbeing of RSE workers is a priority for us, and we have worked with industry and unions to introduce a new provision, that employers will be required to provide a sick leave entitlement to RSE workers.

That is in addition to the pre-existing minimum wage requirement of \$22.10, which we introduced during the pandemic," Michael Wood said. "We continue to work urgently with the industry and unions on further short-term improvements and employee safe guards to provide greater protections to workers. This work is in addition to our wider policy review to improve the RSE scheme for workers, as previously signalled. "We recognise the important role the RSE scheme provides to our nation's primary production sector and wider economy. We are committed to working with industry and unions so we can continue to maximise benefits of the scheme for Pacific workers, local employers, and our Pacific neighbours," Michael Wood said.

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## **Progress Continues on Future-Proofing Auckland's Transport Infrastructure**

Transport Minister Michael Wood has welcomed the latest progress on Auckland's two most transformational transport projects in a generation – Auckland Light Rail and the Additional Waitematā Harbour Connections. Auckland Light Rail and Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency have named preferred bidders to move each project to their next phase, designing the best way to construct Auckland Light Rail and evaluating the preferred transport modes for further development for Waitematā Harbour Connections. "The Government is upgrading New Zealand's transport infrastructure to future proof the system for future generations to come, securing



New Zealand's economy and supporting our largest city to thrive," Michael Wood said. "Together the projects will have far-reaching benefits city-wide, transforming the way people can get around by giving them more travel choices."

"Unlike previous Governments, we recognise that these are not stand-alone projects. Integration with existing rail, bus and ferry connections, together with road and walking/cycling links, will develop a truly modern rapid transit and multi-modal system that better joins communities with job and education centres, provides quicker and safer trips, tackles emissions and brings Auckland's transport system into the 21st century. "Auckland's population is projected to rise to two million by the early 2030's. In order to move two million people around our largest city safely and efficiently, we need well-planned and connected infrastructure. We're not going to repeat the previous mistakes of ad hoc planning and be left scrambling to build infrastructure when it's too late – these projects will make sure Auckland is able to flourish as it grows," Michael Wood said.

Five New Zealand and international companies are included in the alliance (WSP, Beca, SYSTRA and Cox Architecture) for the Waitematā Harbour Connections and two companies with established links in New Zealand, Arup and Aurecon, form the alliance to progress Auckland Light Rail. "These are big jobs that will take time to construct. By working together Waka Kotahi and Auckland Light Rail have ensured industry professionals who design mega-projects are able to best plan for the pipeline of infrastructure work across Aotearoa," Michael Wood said. "Internationally the infrastructure industry is a very competitive environment. Both Alliances include overseas companies with a wealth of experience helping deliver large-scale projects and that is a measure of the significance of two crucial programmes of work to modernise and expand Auckland's rapid transit system to allow the city to grow. "I look forward to seeing these projects continue to be progressed by the Alliance for the benefit of all Aucklanders, and look forward to celebrating more milestones over the coming months" Michael Wood said.

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## **Govt Invests in New Zealand's Wine Future**

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern has officially opened New Zealand Wine Centre—Te Pokapū Wāina o Aotearoa in Blenheim today, saying that investments like these give us cause for optimism for the future. Funding of \$3.79 million for the Marlborough Research Centre to build a national wine centre was announced in 2020, one of the first substantial investments in Marlborough from the Government's Provincial Growth Fund. "Like many a fine wine, our viticulture and winemaking industries continue to grow economically over time and are now one of our country's biggest export earners," Economic and Regional Development Minister Stuart Nash said. "Currently bringing in nearly \$2 billion a year, these exports will only continue to grow

as our new FTAs with the UK and EU come into force, providing even greater economic security to New Zealanders.

“The New Zealand Wine Centre will help our already world-renowned wine producers stay ahead of global trends in wine by developing new products and helping to tackle issues such as the impact of climate change on the sector. “The winemaking sector has a huge impact on the national and regional economy, and accounts for one in five jobs in the Marlborough region. The most recent Marlborough Regional Workforce Plan projects a job growth of 17% for the wine industry, and the Wine Centre will support the development of specialist skills needed for new high-skilled jobs. “As announced earlier, we’re also supporting the viticulture sector by making the largest increase in over a decade to the Recognised Seasonal Employer Scheme (RSE), creating 3,000 additional places and providing workforce relief to the wine sector. “I’m proud to see such a centre of excellence be based in the heart of New Zealand wine country, Marlborough, where over three-quarters of our exported wines are produced.”

At the opening, a variation to Marlborough Research Centre’s existing funding agreement was also announced, reallocating \$770,000 of the existing \$3.79 million investment at their request towards the construction and development of a new state-of-the-art Experimental Future Vineyard. “It’s fantastic to see the plan for the Experimental Future Vineyard, which I know will be a huge asset to our winemaking industry, and help foster cutting-edge Kiwi innovation. It will support sustainable growth in the sector by making use of automation and robotic technologies to prepare for a digital future. This will bring our local winemakers to a whole new level. “The Wine Centre and Experimental Future Vineyard confirm Marlborough’s place as the preeminent location for research and innovation for New Zealand’s wine industry, attracting local and international talent,” Stuart Nash said.

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## 5、 Public Finance

### Asia-Pacific

#### **Inflation Declines Slightly to 10.2% in July 2022 as Energy Prices Slow in Most OECD Countries**

6 Sep 2022 - Year-on-year inflation in the OECD as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) decreased slightly to 10.2% in July 2022 (Figure 1), from 10.3% in June 2022. This development reflects the first decline in inflation since November 2020. While year-on-year inflation fell between June and July 2022 by at least 0.5 percentage points in Canada, Greece, Luxembourg and the United States, the

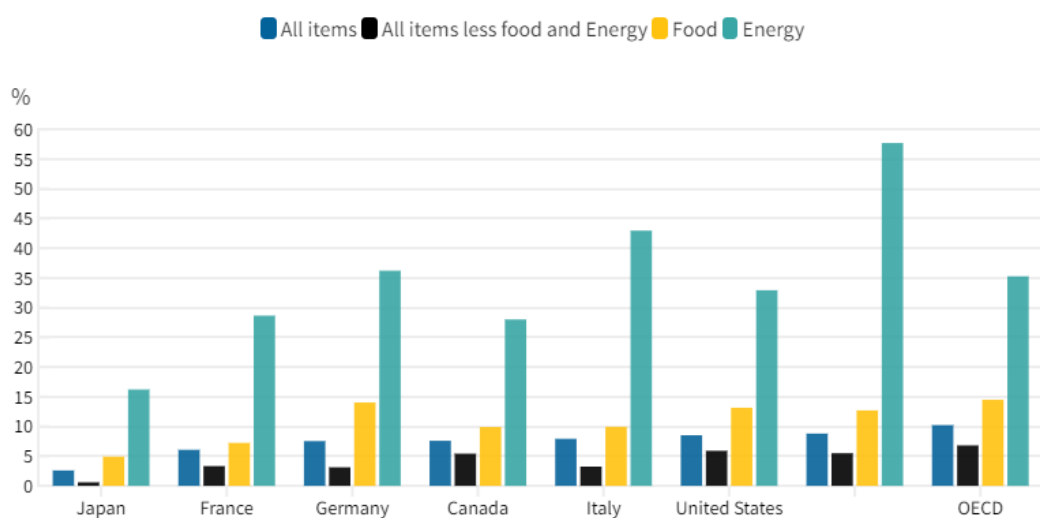
number of countries registering double-digit inflation increased from 13 to 15. Energy price inflation in the OECD fell to 35.3% year-on-year in July 2022, down from 40.7% in June, with decreases in 26 of 38 OECD countries. However, food price inflation in the OECD continued to rise, reaching 14.5% in July 2022, compared with 13.3% in June 2022. Excluding food and energy, year-on-year inflation increased to 6.8% in July 2022, compared with 6.5% in June 2022.

In the G7 area, year-on-year inflation decreased to 7.6% in July 2022, compared with 7.9% in June, with lower energy price inflation in all G7 countries except the United Kingdom. Inflation excluding food and energy was the main contributor to overall inflation in Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, while the combined contribution of food and energy prices was the main contribution to overall inflation in France, Germany, Italy and Japan (Figure 2).

In the euro area, year-on-year inflation as measured by the Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices (HICP) rose to 8.9% in July 2022, compared with 8.6% in June 2022, as the rise in food price inflation and in inflation excluding food and energy more than compensated the fall in energy price inflation. Eurostat's flash estimate for the euro area in August 2022 points to a further increase in year-on-year inflation to 9.1%. Inflation excluding food and energy is estimated to have risen to 4.3%, compared with 4.0% in July 2022, while energy price inflation is estimated to have decreased. In the G20 area year-on-year inflation was stable at 9.2% in July 2022, the same as in June 2022. Outside the OECD, year-on-year inflation rose further in Argentina, China, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and South Africa, but decreased in Brazil and India.

**Figure 1 - Consumer prices, G7 economies and OECD - Headline**

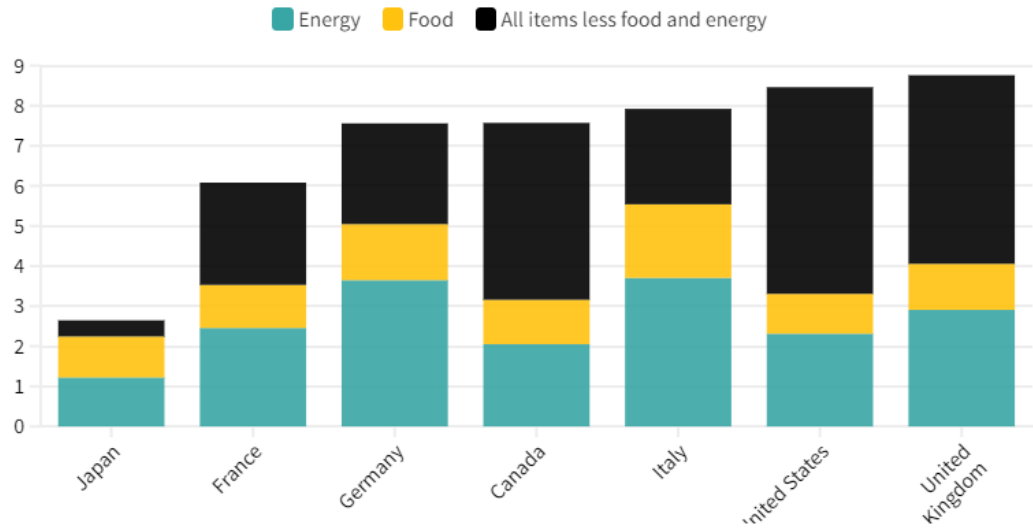
July 2022, year-on-year inflation rate



Source: OECD (2022) [Prices: Consumer Prices \(Database\)](#)

**Figure 2 - Contribution to year-on-year CPI inflation in the G7 countries**

July 2022, percentage points

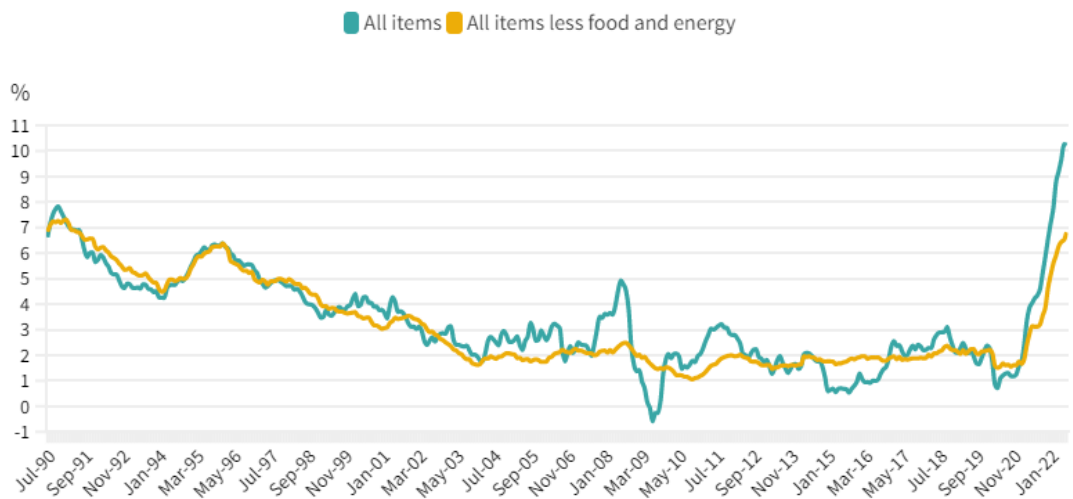


Source: OECD (2022) [Consumer Prices \(Database\)](#).



**Figure 3 - Inflation since 1990's: All items and all items excluding food and energy**

OECD (CPI), year-on-year inflation rate

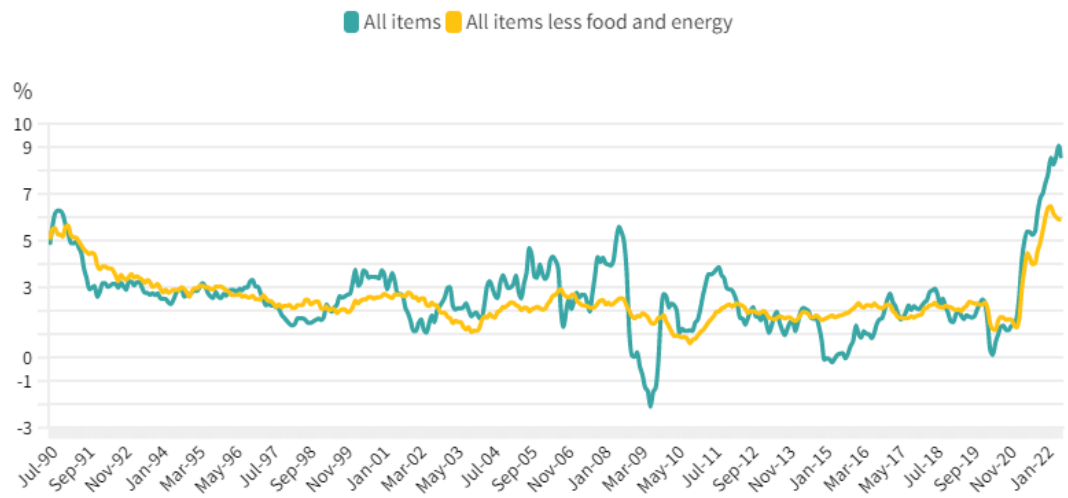


Source: OECD (2022) [Prices: Consumer Prices \(Database\)](#).



**Figure 3 - Inflation since 1990's: All items and all items excluding food and energy**

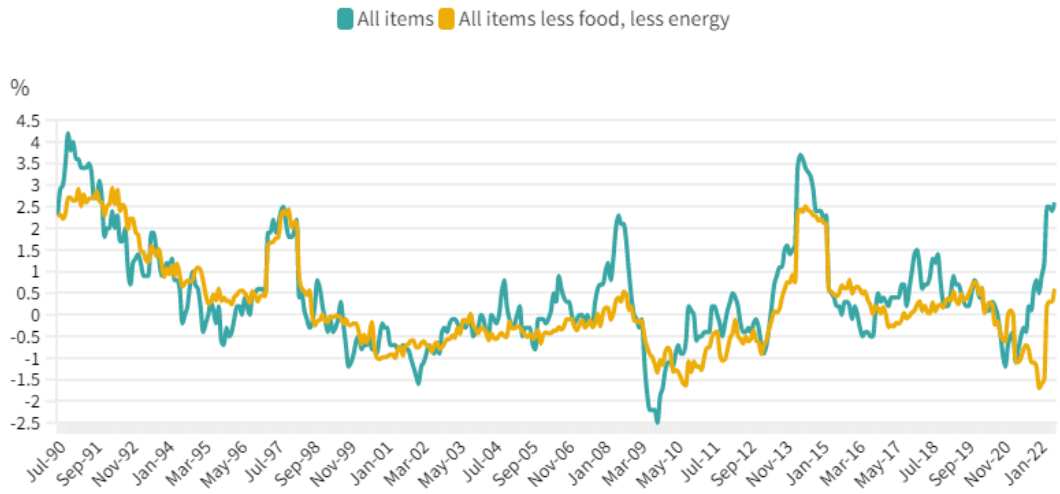
United States (CPI), year-on-year inflation rate



Source: OECD (2022) [Prices: Consumer Prices \(Database\)](#).



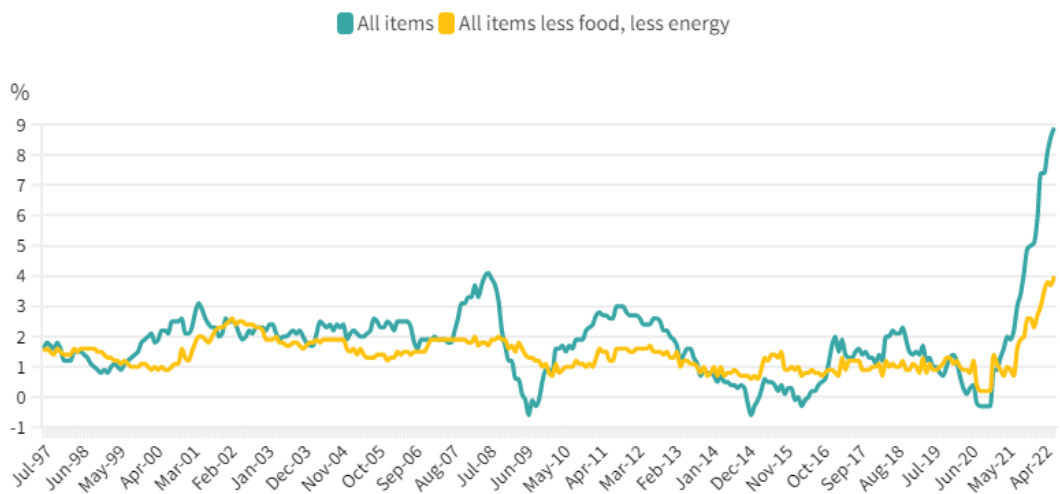
**Figure 3 - Inflation since 1990's: All items and all items excluding food and energy**  
Japan (CPI), year-on-year inflation rate



Source: OECD (2022) [Prices: Consumer Prices \(Database\)](#)



**Figure 3 - Inflation since 1990's: All items and all items excluding food and energy**  
Euro area (HICP), year-on-year inflation rate, percentage



Source: OECD (2022) [Prices: Consumer Prices \(Database\)](#)



From <https://www.oecd.org/> 09/06/2022

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## ADB Enhances Trade and Supply Chain Finance Support for Food Security in Asia

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has boosted its support to ease worsening food shortages in Asia and the Pacific by expanding assistance through its Trade and Supply Chain Finance Program (TSCFP) to clear bottlenecks in the import of food and agriculture products. Over the past 18 months, TSCFP has supported more than

1,900 food and agriculture-related imports valued at \$2.3 billion to 10 countries in developing Asia, with most assistance going to Bangladesh, Viet Nam, and Pakistan. To enhance its support, TSCFP has boosted risk limits on trade finance guarantees for food imports by \$300 million. When combined with partner commercial bank cofinancing of transactions under the expanded limits, the support can translate into around \$500 million of extra finance for food imports in the region.

The additional support will facilitate trade in food and goods such as fertilizers to promote food production, with the new limits allowing ADB to assume extra exposure in transactions with its partner banks to finance the import of these items. The new limits will be reviewed after a year. “There is a growing food crisis that means more families are going hungry every day in developing countries in Asia,” said TSCFP Head Steven Beck. “Already, a significant share of our trade finance portfolio supports food security. But it’s clear we need to do even more, as high inflation in food prices has eaten into existing global trade finance limits for food imports. The new higher limits enable us and our partner banks to expand trade financing and improve food security in Asia’s developing economies.”

Food systems are under mounting strain from increased frequency and severity of weather extremes, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, supply chain disruptions, and increasing conflict and insecurity. These factors have triggered rising global food prices as reflected by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Food Price Index that climbed 54% during May 2020--June 2022. The expansion of trade finance for food security builds on ADB’s long-term financing for food and agriculture through governments, agribusinesses, and financial intermediaries. In 2021, TSCFP supported 1,411 transactions valued at \$1.6 billion in food and agricultural commodities, and 83 transactions valued at \$247 million to support fertilizers and food production machinery. Backed by ADB’s AAA credit rating, TSCFP provides loans and guarantees to more than 200 partner banks to support trade, creating import and export opportunities for enterprises across Asia and the Pacific.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 09/15/2022

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## **Historic First-Ever International Finance Facility for Education Launched at United Nations Transforming Education Summit**

On Saturday, 17 September at the United Nations Transforming Education Summit, world leaders backed the establishment of the first-ever innovative guarantee fund specifically designed to invest in the education of the world’s poorest children and youth—the International Finance Facility for Education (IFFEd). IFFEd will directly address the devastating global education crisis and learning inequalities that have been exacerbated by the deadly combination of COVID-19, climate change, and conflicts. It targets the urgent needs of lower-middle-income countries (LMICs) which

are home to more than half of the world's children and youth and where 3 out of 4 young people leave school without the basic skills to thrive. UN Secretary-General António Guterres said, "The International Finance Facility for Education is aimed at getting financing to lower-middle-income countries—home to half the world's children and youth—and to the majority of the world's displaced and refugee children. In time, we expect it to grow into a \$10 billion facility to educate tomorrow's generation of young people. I congratulate Special Envoy Gordon Brown and all the countries and institutions involved in getting this facility off the ground. And I urge all international donors and philanthropic organizations to back it."

Donor governments and multilateral development banks have come together to launch IFFEd and provide an initial \$2 billion in additional affordable funding for education programs to be disbursed starting in 2023. IFFEd could unlock an extra \$10 billion of additional financing for education and skills by 2030. The groundbreaking new facility uses a mix of sovereign guarantees and donor grants, to provide affordable education financing. In the current resource-constrained environment, IFFEd is a game changer for both donors and LMICs, as it multiplies donor dollars 7 times as compared to traditional aid. On Friday, 16 September, more than 100 leading economists and world leaders signed an open letter calling for the launch of IFFEd to transform the lives of millions of children and young people around the world. Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands have been at the forefront of the design of this innovation since the start. The facility is in the final stages of registration in Switzerland. IFFEd will initially focus on the Asia and Africa regions, in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the African Development Bank (AfDB), before expanding globally.

IFFEd is a direct response to education budget cuts around the world and the need to leverage scarce resources in the face of compounding crises. From 2019 to 2020, 43 donors reduced their bilateral aid to education, and 40% of low- and lower-middle-income countries reduced their education budgets. Gordon Brown, UN Special Envoy for Global Education and Education Commission Chair joined the UN Secretary-General and said: "To truly transform education, we need a fundamental shift. Business as usual will not suffice. This is why the International Finance Facility for Education—IFFEd—is such an exciting development for our future generations. IFFEd has the potential to unlock \$10 billion in new resources to support half of the world's most vulnerable children whose pleas to 'Let Me Learn' must be heard."

Countries have underlined the need for IFFEd, and a growing coalition of public and private partners have expressed strong support for IFFEd's establishment including: Shehbaz Sharif, Prime Minister of Pakistan: "The recent floods have destroyed over 23,700 schools in our country and have affected 22,000 other schools due to closures, damages, or sheltering families afflicted by the flood damages. The impact on the lives and minds of millions of our children and youth will be felt for years to come. As we work to rebuild from this catastrophe, the new stream of affordable



education financing from IFFEd will be crucial to help meet our financing needs to provide an inclusive and quality education for our most vulnerable children and youth.” Dr. Reda Hegazy, Minister of Education of Egypt: “In Egypt, like in many of our neighboring countries, our education budget is still trying to cope with the increasing number of children enrolled in education. For us, innovative financing is a must to transform our education system. We welcome the International Finance Facility for Education as an international effort to unlock more affordable financing for education and are committed to harnessing IFFEd’s power to deliver new educational opportunities for Egypt’s children and youth.”

Masatsugu Asakawa, President of the Asian Development Bank: “The unprecedented job and learning losses caused by the pandemic require a global coalition and a commitment at scale to mobilize additional financing that will significantly expand support for those in need. ADB is pleased to be a leading partner in taking forward the International Finance Facility for Education initiative in Asia and the Pacific.” Matilda Ernkrans, Minister for International Development Cooperation, Sweden: “Once approved, Sweden’s guarantee to IFFEd will be our largest guarantee ever within international development cooperation. It will enable innovative finance to increase domestic resource mobilization in exchange for new international funding for education to serve the most marginalized students. Education for all children and youth, leaving no one behind, is a key priority for Swedish development cooperation.”

Liesje Schreinemacher, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, the Netherlands: “The Netherlands welcomes the financial innovation at the heart of IFFEd, which enables donor dollars to reach 7 times more children and young people to benefit from education. By partnering with private and philanthropic funders, IFFEd has strong potential to deliver on critical priorities such as vocational education to prepare young people for work in lower-middle-income countries. These countries face many challenges, including climate change, poverty, and inequality, where the Netherlands combined aid and trade efforts can make a difference.” Dr. Rajiv J. Shah, President of The Rockefeller Foundation: “Innovations like the International Finance Facility for Education can help ensure we are getting maximum leverage out of each dollar of education funding. By expanding such funding, this facility will scale the solutions humanity needs to make opportunity universal and sustainable.”

Mark Reading, Head of Foundation, Atlassian “We strongly believe in the International Finance Facility for Education and we have put our funding into it to make it happen. We are urging the involvement of other philanthropists and governments because we have to act right now to cut back the terrible losses caused by children being out of school.” Asif Saleh, Executive Director, BRAC: “As a pioneer in the global south with decades of experience delivering learning opportunities to the world’s most marginalized children, BRAC welcomes this much-needed additional investment in education.” Liesbet Steer, Executive Director, Education

Commission: “Delivering financial innovation such as IFFEd requires courage and perseverance. Our founding partners deserve huge credit for advancing what is perhaps the most significant development finance innovation in the last decade as recognized in the recent G20 MDB Capital Adequacy Framework Review.”

From <https://www.adb.org/> 09/20/2022

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## **ADB Sells \$4 Billion Dual Tranche 2- 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 2-year bond issue worth \$2.75 billion and a 10-year global bond issue worth \$1.25 billion, proceeds of which will be part of ADB’s ordinary capital resources. The dual tranche transaction marks ADB’s fifth outing in the US dollar market this year following the \$4.5 billion 5-year global benchmark bond offering in mid-August. “We are pleased with the strong and consistent support from our investors across regions in our dual tranche outing,” said ADB Deputy Treasurer Sukhumarn Phanachet. “With an orderbook of over \$6.8 billion, we raised \$4 billion across the two maturities which once again provides us with additional resources to assist our developing member countries in Asia and the Pacific.” The 2-year bond, with a coupon rate of 4.125% per annum payable semi-annually and a maturity date of 27 September 2024, was priced at 99.956% to yield 19.9 basis points over the 3.25% US Treasury notes due 31 August 2024. The 10-year bond, with a coupon rate of 3.875% per annum payable semi-annually and a maturity date of 9 June 2028, was priced at 99.910% to yield 31.5 basis points over the 2.75% US Treasury notes due 15 August 2032.

The transaction was lead-managed by Credit Agricole CIB, Deutsche Bank, Morgan Stanley, and RBC Capital Markets. Both tranches achieved wide primary market distribution. On the 2-year tranche, central banks and official institutions represented the bulk of demand, receiving 57.4% of the final allocation. Investors in Europe, Middle East, and Africa (EMEA) were dominant at 45.5%, followed by investors from the Americas (39%) and Asia (15.5%). On the 10-year tranche, orders were anchored by banks, which accounted for 50.5% of the final allocation. In terms of geography, investors in EMEA were dominant at 62.9%, followed by investors from Asia (21.4%) and the Americas (15.7%). ADB plans to raise \$34 billion–\$36 billion from the capital markets in 2022.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 09/22/2022

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## **East Asia**

### **CHINA: Chinese Yuan Assets Becoming Increasingly Popular Among Overseas Investors**

The opening up of China's financial market has made yuan-denominated assets more alluring for overseas investors, and promoted global use of the Chinese currency, said a latest report by the People's Bank of China. By the end of 2021, overseas entities had held 10.83 trillion yuan (about 1.55 trillion U.S. dollars) worth of yuan assets including equities, bonds, loans and deposits, up 20.5 percent year on year, the report added. Cross-border settlements in yuan have also surged, with those used for current account and direct investment totaling 6 trillion yuan in the first half of this year, up 23 percent over a year ago. Yuan settlements in cross-border e-commerce trade rose 20.7 percent from the same period last year to 431.7 billion yuan, according to the report. Over 80 overseas central banks or currency authorities had the yuan in their forex reserves, said the report. In the first quarter of this year, the Chinese currency accounted for 2.88 percent of global forex reserves, up 1.8 percentage points from 2016 when it entered the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Special Drawing Rights basket, said the report, citing IMF data.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 09/24/2022

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## **China's Policy Bank Ups Financial Support for Major Projects**

The China Development Bank has provided another 150 billion yuan (about 21.45 billion U.S. dollars) to support major infrastructure projects, according to the bank. The funds are part of the additional 300 billion yuan of infrastructure investment announced by the government in late August, and have financed 421 infrastructure projects, the bank said. As of Sept. 20, the bank has channeled a total of 360 billion yuan of such investment funds into over 800 infrastructure projects. At a State Council executive meeting last month, China pledged to increase the 300-billion-yuan policy-backed and development-oriented financial instruments for specific projects by another 300-plus billion yuan. The bank said it will continue to ensure solid work is carried out on fund operations and post-investment management, and it will push for concrete progress in the projects.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 09/25/2022

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## **China's Central Bank Vows More Vigorous Support for Real Economy**

China's central bank on Thursday said that it would strengthen cross-cyclical and counter-cyclical adjustments, and step up the implementation of prudent monetary policy, among other efforts, to provide more vigorous support for the real economy. At a quarterly meeting of its monetary policy committee, the People's Bank of China said that it would smooth the monetary policy transmission mechanism, maintain liquidity at a reasonable and ample level, and shore up the stable growth of the total

credit amount. Policy-backed and development-oriented financial instruments will be used to support infrastructure development, while structural monetary tools will be leveraged to enhance support for key sectors, weak links and COVID-impacted industries, according to the bank. It also stressed the need to optimize the policy interest rate system to further lower the costs of corporate financing and consumer loans. The central bank pledged to make full and good use of its policy toolkit by adopting city-specific policies, and to support people's essential housing needs, as well as their needs for better housing, to promote the stable and sound development of the real estate market.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 09/29/2022

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## **China's Tax and Fee Cuts, Deferrals Help Stabilize Macroeconomy**

China's combined tax and fee support policies have helped ease the burden on market entities and stabilize the macroeconomy, official data showed on Thursday. The country's tax refunds, as well as tax and fee cuts and deferrals exceeded 3.4 trillion yuan (about 478 billion U.S. dollars) by Sept. 20, Cai Zili, an official with the State Taxation Administration told a press conference. The total consists of approximately 2.21 trillion yuan worth of value-added tax credits that had been refunded to taxpayers' accounts, 591.6 billion yuan of tax and fee cuts, and 632.6 billion yuan of deferred tax and fee payments. "Multiple policy tools have been effectively combined, creating synergy and supporting efforts to bail out businesses in difficulty," said Cai. Official data shows that China has deferred 525.6 billion yuan worth of taxes and fees for 3.05 million micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in the manufacturing sector since the implementation of the tax and fee deferment policy. It is estimated that the policy in general is expected to save over 20 billion yuan in financing costs for these companies. Thursday's press conference also showed that China's accumulated export rebates and exemptions totaled 1.35 trillion yuan in the first eight months, playing a positive role in promoting the steady increase of the country's exports.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 09/29/2022

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## **JAPAN: BOJ Sticks to Monetary Easing Policy**

The Bank of Japan says it is sticking to its massive easy-monetary stance, even as other central banks are raising interest rates. BOJ board members made the decision at a two-day policy meeting ending on Thursday. The bank will keep its short-term interest rate in negative territory and continue buying government bonds to hold long-term rates at around zero percent. Just hours before the BOJ meeting, the US Federal Reserve once again raised its key interest rate by three-quarters of a

percentage point in a bid to tame the highest inflation the country has seen in four decades. The decisions by the two central banks further widens the interest rate gap between Japan and the US, which could accelerate the yen's slide against the dollar. The Japanese currency has fallen to a 24-year low against the dollar as investors seeking higher yields in the US have driven a selloff.

From <https://www3.nhk.or.jp> 09/22/2022

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## **Japan Eyes Hiking Defense Spending to ¥40 Trillion over 5 Years**

Japan is considering sharply increasing its defense spending to more than 40 trillion yen over the next five years, government officials said Saturday. The amount compares with the 27.47 trillion yen in total specified as defense costs for five years through fiscal 2023 in the country's Medium Term Defense Program. The plan reflects Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's pledge to "fundamentally reinforce" the country's defense capabilities in the face of China's military expansion and North Korea's rapid nuclear and missile development. Senior government officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the five-year plan presenting the total amount of expenses, such as for major equipment to be procured, would not reach 50 trillion yen, but would exceed 40. The ruling Liberal Democratic Party, led by Kishida, is seeking to double defense spending to 2 percent or more of the country's gross domestic product -- a level on par with the benchmark for North Atlantic Treaty Organization member states.

Japan, known for its pacifist Constitution, has long capped its annual defense budget at about 1 percent of GDP, or over 5 trillion yen. If the projected figure of over 40 trillion yen is reached in the five-year defense program commencing next April, annual expenses could reach 10 trillion yen in the new plan's final fiscal year as envisioned by the Defense Ministry and almost meet the 2 percent target. The government is trying to update the medium-term program along with other key documents by year-end, with defense and finance ministry officials planning to hash out the details of spending plans. The Defense Ministry earlier this year requested 5.59 trillion yen, the largest amount ever, to be allocated in the country's initial budget for the next fiscal year starting in April. The outlay could eventually further balloon to around 6.5 trillion yen once some unspecified costs are finalized. Under the plan, from fiscal 2024 onward, defense spending is set to rise by around 1 trillion yen annually.

Among the areas to receive the additional funds are long-range missiles for use in counterstrike capabilities, drones and other unmanned technology, and construction of new destroyers to be equipped with the Aegis missile interceptor system. The ministry also plans to use the extra funds to boost sustained combat capabilities, including improving missiles and munitions storage, as well as production. However, Japan's fiscal health is already the worst among developed countries, with its debt

more than twice the size of its economy. The yet-to-be-compiled national budget for the next fiscal year is also expected to hit another record. The Finance Ministry initially intends to maintain fiscal discipline by funding the increased defense spending through issuing government bonds, and plans to repay the debt by raising corporate and other taxes. But there is strong opposition to tax increases in Japan, making it possible the 40 trillion yen level will not be met or it will be lumped in with other national security expenditures, some officials said.

From <https://japantoday.com> 09/26/2022

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## **Japan to Invest ¥1 Tril in Human Resources Development over 5 Years**

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida is set to announce plans to invest 1 trillion yen over five years in human resources development for growth industries in his speech during an extraordinary parliamentary session to be convened next week, government sources said. Kishida is also expected to vow to "sincerely, humbly and respectfully face the severe opinions of the public" in light of the controversy over ties between members of his Liberal Democratic Party and the Unification Church, as well as the state funeral for assassinated former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. A draft of the policy speech, to be delivered when the new session opens next Monday, showed that Kishida will also indicate plans to submit a second supplementary budget this year to finance an economic stimulus package to be finalized in October, and highlight his drive to create a "new form of capitalism" by achieving both growth and distribution. On rising inflation, Kishida is expected to warn that electricity prices could surge over a period through next spring and, in order to offset the burden on households and businesses, he will call for "unprecedented and drastic measures," according to the draft.

The prime minister will present the government's target for annual spending by inbound tourists to recover to over 5 trillion yen by taking advantage of the weak yen. The government will also seek to increase salaries for public-sector care workers and nurses, among others, in line with growth in private-sector wages, according to the draft. Emphasis will be placed on accelerating public- and private-sector investment in four areas that drive growth, including decarbonization efforts and startup promotion. The draft also indicates plans to "promptly submit" a bill to amend the public offices election law to reflect the latest redistricting in single-seat constituencies for the House of Representatives. Following the recent death of a 3-year-old girl in Shizuoka Prefecture after she was left inside a bus for hours during the day, Kishida will also pledge to start compiling safety regulations as a matter of urgency, the draft showed. In connection with a review of the national security strategy and key documents on defense policy due by the end of the year, Kishida is expected to reiterate his commitment to "protecting peace and stability in Asia and the world by conducting multilayered diplomacy and drastically strengthening

defense capabilities."

From <https://japantoday.com> 09/29/2022

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## **Japan Spent Record 2.84 Tril. Yen in Intervention to Stop Yen Plunge**

Japan's currency intervention last week cost 2.84 trillion yen (\$19 billion), the largest-ever amount spent to stem the yen's sharp slide against the U.S. dollar, Finance Ministry data showed Friday. The yen-buying, dollar-selling operation, Japan's first since 1998, was carried out on Sept. 22, shortly after the Japanese currency plunged past the psychologically important 145 mark amid prospects that the monetary policies of Japan and the United States would further diverge.

From <https://nordot.app> 09/30/2022

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## **SOUTH KOREA: OECD Raises Inflation Outlook for S. Korea to 5.2 Pct, Growth Forecast to 2.8 Pct**

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on Monday raised its 2022 inflation outlook for South Korea to 5.2 percent amid high energy prices over the protracted war in Ukraine. The organization also raised its growth forecast for the South Korean economy this year to 2.8 percent on the back of solid exports and "skillful management" of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the biennial report on the Korean economy, the OECD raised the inflation outlook by 0.4 percentage point from its June estimate of 4.8 percent. It would be the fastest on-year increase since 1998, when the country saw inflation jump 7.5 percent. The latest projection is the same as the Bank of Korea's (BOK) estimate made in August. The BOK aims to keep annual inflation at 2 percent over the medium term.

In August, consumer prices, a key gauge of inflation, jumped 5.7 percent from a year earlier over high energy and commodity prices. The government has forecast inflation could peak in around October. The Paris-based organization also revised up its inflation outlook for the country next year by 0.1 percentage point to 3.9 percent. The latest assessments came amid concerns over the global economic slowdown due mainly to high inflation and aggressive monetary tightening, as Russia's invasion of Ukraine has been weighing on economic activity and has disrupted global supply chains. "The preemptive moves (by the BOK) have helped keep inflation expectations anchored and nominal wage increases modest so far. However, year-ahead inflation expectations have increased lately and upward pressure on nominal wages is expected to mount as the labour market tightens," the report read.

Since August 2021, the central bank has jacked up the key policy rate at a fast pace from 0.5 percent to 2.5 percent to tame surging inflation, including the latest 0.25

percentage-point hikes last month. The OECD then recommended Seoul to "gradually consolidate the fiscal position" and to continue to move toward a less accommodative monetary policy stance with a view to keep inflation expectations in check." As for growth outlook, the organization raised its 2022 forecast for the South Korean economy to 2.8 percent from its earlier forecast of 2.7 percent, while cutting the forecast for next year to 2.2 percent from 2.5 percent. The BOK said the economy is forecast to grow 2.6 percent this year and 2.1 percent next year. "Sound health management and supportive policies helped Korea emerge swiftly from the pandemic, with economic growth boosted by strong semiconductor exports. The recovery is set to continue," according to the report.

From <https://en.yna.co.kr> 09/19/2022

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## **S. Korea to Spend W200b for R&D Digitalization**

South Korea will spend 200 billion won (\$144 million) on digital integration strategy projects over the next five years to shorten the time researchers take to solve complex problem surrounding new technologies by decades, the Ministry of Science said Tuesday. According to the ministry, the government will use the financial support for projects that integrate artificial intelligence, digital twin and big data into developing diagnoses of diseases such as intractable cancer and dementia, nine new materials and prediction models of changes in space. The ministry plans to increase the number of smart laboratories such as AI robot material labs and bio foundry facilities. The government will look to strengthen support for advancing the infrastructure of collecting, sharing and utilizing research data by setting up and operating a quality checking center for research data. The ministry will develop over 40 data analysis models for various research purposes including designing antibodies and diagnosing diseases through reviewing protein data as well as predicting synthesis probabilities based on material data.

In order to secure core research personnel, the ministry will expand data science education for 1,000 master's and doctorate students through 2028. The ministry will also provide AI education for some 8,000 researchers at government-funded research institutes through 2027. "From protein structure analysis to semiconductor design and material development, the importance of research and development integrating digital techniques is becoming bigger in order to overcome the limitations of traditional research methods and create innovative achievements," said Oh Tae-seog, first vice minister at the Ministry of Science and ICT, as he announced the ministry's digital integration strategies for R&D at the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology. "With the (digital integration) strategies, we will continue to provide support measures to lead the digital research innovation together with researchers," he added.

From <http://www.koreaherald.com> 09/20/2022

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## **BOK to Sell 9.9 Tln Won Worth of Monetary Stabilization Bonds Next Month**

South Korea's central bank said Thursday it will issue a larger amount of monetary stabilization bonds (MSBs) in October from a month earlier to better manage market liquidity. The Bank of Korea (BOK) said it plans to sell 9.9 trillion won (US\$6.89 billion) worth of MSBs next month, compared with 8.8 trillion won worth of bonds scheduled to be sold this month. The MSB is a policy tool devised to control excess liquidity in the markets. It is sold to financial institutions and individuals.

From <https://en.yna.co.kr> 09/29/2022

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## **Yoon Says Gov't Will Take Necessary Steps Against Financial Volatility**

President Yoon Suk-yeol said Friday the government will take necessary and timely steps to protect the people against increasing financial volatility. Yoon made the remark while presiding over a macrofinancial meeting with government and business officials, citing an "unprecedentedly strong dollar" and the U.S. Federal Open Market Committee's decision last week to raise the interest rate. "The level of shock from the crisis that began from external factors will depend on how we respond internally," he said during the meeting in central Seoul. "The government will be the first to become more alert and take necessary and timely steps in line with the emergency measures plan we have prepared," he added. Yoon also said the current economic crisis should be used as an opportunity to improve the country's economic constitution to one that is led by the private sector and the market. "Every time energy prices have jumped, our economy has faced difficulties, so we need to shift our industries to a low-energy consuming and high-efficiency structure," he said, promising that the government will provide active support for such efforts by businesses.

From <https://en.yna.co.kr> 09/30/2022

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## **South-East Asia**

### **CAMBODIA: Issuing 1st Gov't Bond of 24.3 Mln USD**

The National Bank of Cambodia (NBC), Cambodia's central bank, on Wednesday issued the first government bond of 100 billion riels (about 24.3 million U.S. dollars), aiming to raise funds for national development. The bond is auctioned through the NBC's platform from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. local time, the NBC said in a statement, adding that the face value per unit is worth 1 million riels (about 243 dollars). The bond offers a fixed interest rate of 2 percent per annum, which would be paid every six months, the NBC said, adding that the tenor of the bond is one year. The issuance is the first

phase of the Cambodian government's plan to issue sovereign bonds worth a total of 300 million dollars, it said. Kim Sophanita, director of the Market Operations Department at the Cambodia Securities Exchange (CSX), said the Cambodia capital market has moved to another stage of development with a more complete and adequate infrastructure.

"The government bond market is crucial and beneficial to every stakeholder," the official told Xinhua on Wednesday. "It provides additional financing option to the government, additional investment options to institutional investors, additional financial instrument for effective monetary policy management, a benchmark for every financial product, and more," Sophanita added. Investors in sovereign bonds will enjoy a 50-percent deduction of withholding tax on the interest earned from holding and trading the bonds, and tax exemption on capital gains from purchasing and trading the bonds for three years, according to the Ministry of Economy and Finance. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Finance Aun Pornmoniroth said recently that sovereign bonds will allow the government to raise funds for socio-economic development projects. He added that the bonds will serve as a new financial instrument for institutional investors such as banks, insurance companies, the National Social Security Fund and pension fund, among others.

*From <https://english.news.cn/> 09/07/2022*

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## **Cambodian Gov't Revenue Reaches 4 Bln USD in First 8 Months of 2022**

The Cambodian government collected 16,430 billion riels (about 4 billion U.S. dollars) in revenue from taxation and customs during the first eight months of 2022, said a press statement from the Ministry of Economy and Finance on Wednesday. "We had achieved 70 percent of the target set in the (2022 national budget) law, while fiscal revenue continued to contribute up to 93 percent of the total revenue," the statement said. The Southeast Asian country has two institutions responsible for collecting taxes. One is the General Department of Taxation, which focuses on interior taxes such as income tax, salary tax, value added tax, and property tax, and the other is the General Department of Customs and Excise, which collects taxes on goods entering and leaving the country. According to the statement, the government spending during the January-August period this year had reached 15,271 billion riels (about 3.7 billion dollars) or 57 percent of the target set for this year.

*From <https://english.news.cn/> 09/07/2022*

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## **MYANMAR: Brings in 300 Mln USD from Rice Export in April-August**

Myanmar earned an estimate 302 million U.S. dollars from its exportation of 889,991

metric tons of rice and broken rice to foreign trade partners within the first five months of this financial year 2022-2023, the state-run the Global New Light of Myanmar reported on Wednesday. The media quoted the Myanmar Rice Federation (MRF) as saying that over 731,590 metric tons of rice were shipped to external markets via sea routes by approximately 44 exporter companies, whereas over 158,400 metric tons were delivered to neighboring countries through border posts. Through maritime trade, the Southeast Asian country exported rice and broken rice to regional countries, countries in Africa and European Union member countries, and also transported through cross-border posts to neighboring countries, including China and Thailand, the media stated. According to the MRF, the country has shipped more than 1.4 million tons of rice and broken rice to foreign trade partners between Oct. 1 and March 31 in the past mini-budget period (2021-2022) and bagged 700 million dollars from 2 million tons of rice exports to foreign countries in the past financial year 2020-2021. Myanmar's current financial year started on April 1 this year after the country changed its financial year cycle from the original October-September to April-March starting in 2022.

*From <https://english.news.cn/09/07/2022>*

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## **MALAYSIA: Attracting 27.5 Bln USD Investment in First Half of 2022**

The Malaysian Investment Development Authority (MIDA) said Friday that Malaysia has attracted 123.3 billion ringgit (27.5 billion U.S. dollars) in approved investments in the manufacturing, services and primary sectors in the first half of this year. Foreign direct investment (FDI) remained the major contributor, accounting for 70.9 percent of the approved investments with 87.4 billion ringgit (19.5 billion U.S. dollars), it said in a statement. Meanwhile, investments from domestic sources contributed 29.1 percent, amounting to 35.9 billion ringgit (8 billion U.S. dollars). The services sector played a major role in driving the country's economic recovery, accounting for 63.3 percent of the total approved investments with 78 billion ringgit (17.4 billion U.S. dollars), followed by the manufacturing sector with 43.1 billion ringgit (9.6 billion U.S. dollars) and the primary sector with 2.2 billion ringgit (491 million U.S. dollars). Mohamed Azmin Ali, the minister for international trade and industry, said Malaysia is on the right trajectory to secure more high-quality and capital-intensive projects, with the services sector being the key growth driver for the economy and the largest contributor to approved investments for the first half of this year. In maintaining the momentum, he said his ministry will continue efforts to strengthen the country's competitiveness by developing economic complexity, nurturing a strong industrial ecosystem with innovations, enhancing inclusiveness, creating high-income jobs and promoting opportunities to participate in regional and global supply chains. "Driven by the National Investment Aspirations (NIA), we will intensify our focus towards sectors such as digital economy, electrical and electronics (E&E), pharmaceutical, chemical and aerospace with significant economic potential and sustainable

long-term growth," he said.

From <https://english.news.cn> 09/02/2022

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## **Malaysian Ringgit Movements Continue to Be Market Determined: Central Bank**

The Malaysian Central Bank said here on Friday Malaysian ringgit movements will continue to be market determined. Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) said in a statement that the bank continues to closely monitor and ensure orderly financial market conditions amidst external developments that have led to persistent strength in the U.S. dollar against almost all currencies, including the ringgit. The dollar has strengthened significantly due to aggressive monetary policy tightening in the United States, it added. It also said the tighter global financial conditions and higher volatility in the foreign exchange markets are not expected to derail Malaysia's economic growth. According to the bank, the Malaysian economy expanded by 8.9 percent in the second quarter and will continue to be driven by further improvements in labor market conditions and higher tourism activities. It also said Malaysia's exports are underpinned by its highly diversified products and markets. The domestic financial system is well capitalized with ample liquidity, and financial intermediation continues to be supportive of the economy, it added. The BNM also said that the foreign exchange market continues to function and intermediate effectively. According to the bank, daily onshore foreign exchange transaction volume has been increasing throughout, reaching a current average of 13.3 billion dollars against 11.3 billion dollars in 2021, amid two-way flows. Bond market activity remains healthy, and is well supported by institutional investors and financial institutions, it said. It also said the BNM's market operations will ensure sufficient liquidity and orderly functioning of financial markets. "Malaysia remains an open economy. Rather than resorting to capital controls or re-pegging of the ringgit, the policy priority now is to sustain economic growth in an environment of price stability and to further strengthen domestic economic fundamentals through structural reforms. This will provide a more enduring support for the ringgit," Bank Negara Malaysia Governor Nor Shamsiah said.

From <https://english.news.cn> 09/23/2022

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## **PHILIPPINES: Balance of Payments Posts 572 Mln USD Deficit in August**

The Philippines' overall balance of payments (BOP) position posted a 572 million U.S. dollar deficit in August, a reversal from the 1.04 billion dollar BOP surplus recorded a year earlier, the Philippine central bank said Monday. The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) said the BOP deficit in August reflected outflows arising mainly from the national government's foreign currency withdrawals from its deposits with the

BSP to settle its foreign currency debt obligations and pay for its various expenditures. The August BOP deficit brought the cumulative BOP level for January to August this year to a 5.5 billion dollar deficit, higher than the 253 million dollar deficit recorded in the same period last year. According to the BSP, the gross international reserves level declined to 97.4 billion dollars as of end-August.

*From <https://english.news.cn/09/19/2022>*

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## **THAILAND: Finance Ministry Upbeat as Annual Tax Revenue Beats Target for 1st Time Since Covid**

Tax Revenue For 2022 Has Already Surpassed The Target Of 2.4 Trillion Baht, In A Sign That The Economy Is Recovering, The Finance Ministry Said On Tuesday. Ministry permanent secretary Krisada Chinavicharana said the target had already been exceeded by 70 billion baht. The 2022 fiscal year will end this month. The surplus would be 130 billion baht had the diesel tax not been reduced to soften the impact of soaring fuel prices, Krisada added. The ministry expects this month's revenue collection to increase in line with rising consumption and tourism. The Revenue Department collected 1.67 trillion baht during the first 10 months of fiscal 2022, which was 210 billion baht more than at the same period last year. But the Excise Department failed to meet its own revenue target after the government reduced diesel excise tax three times. The Finance Ministry expects the economy to expand 3.5 per cent this year from 2021. This is the first year since the Covid-19 pandemic began that the government has reached its tax-revenue target. It missed the target by 336 billion baht (12.3 per cent) in 2020 and 307 billion baht (11.5 per cent) in 2021. Krisada said the government's decision to extend the diesel tax cut for two months from September 20 to November 20 would cost the government about 20 billion baht in revenue. The government has set a revenue target of 2.49 trillion baht for fiscal 2023, which begins next month. Krisada said the Finance Ministry is confident that target will be met as well.

*From <https://www.nationthailand.com/09/13/2022>*

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## **Energy Ministry Lines Up Diesel Tax Cut, Power Bill Discounts as Fuel Crisis Deepens**

The Energy Ministry Will Propose Two Measures To The Cabinet Tomorrow Aimed At Alleviating People's Financial Burdens As Energy Prices Soar. Minister Supattanapong Punmeechaow said he will propose extending the excise tax cut for diesel, currently set at 5 baht per litre but due to expire on September 20. He did not say how long the measure will last or whether the tax cut will remain at 5 baht. The other proposal is for discounts on electricity bills for households. This measure is expected to last from September to December and will see households that use 301-500 units per month receive discounts of between 15 and 75 per cent off their

bills. Households using less than 300 units per month will get a discounted per-unit rate of 0.9204 baht. The ministry estimates that the power-bill discounts will cost the government around 2 billion baht per month or 8 billion for four months. The discounts will be funded by the 2022-2023 central and emergency government budgets. Supattanapong added that the Energy Ministry is also in talks with the Finance Ministry to issue tax benefits for households that install solar rooftop panels. This move is aimed at getting more people to use renewable energy. He added that since the start of the global energy crisis following Russia's invasion of Ukraine earlier this year, the government has spent over 200 billion baht in energy subsidies to soften impacts on the general public. Of this, 120 billion baht has been spent on the Oil Fuel Fund to subsidise prices at the pump, while about 80 billion was used by the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (Egat) to suppress fuel tariff rises. Supattanapong said subsidy to Egat could soon exceed 100 billion baht if the price of natural gas in the global market continues to rise.

*From <https://www.nationthailand.com> 09/15/2022*

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## **Thai Gov't Revenue Exceeds Forecast amid Economic Recovery**

Thailand's government revenue amounted to 2.26 trillion baht (about 60.46 billion U.S. dollars) during the first 11 months of fiscal year 2022, 5.5 percent above the forecast, in an emerging sign of economic recovery, a government spokesperson said Thursday. During the period between October 2021 and August 2022, the government revenue expanded 6.8 percent from one year earlier, which has shown an emerging sign of economic recovery and signaled that the government's supportive measures are on the right track and relevant with the situation, acting government spokesperson Anucha Burapachaisri said. Continued recovery of the country's tourism sector also contributed to the revenue increase, Anucha said. The Southeast Asian country's economy grew 2.4 percent year on year in the first half of 2022, and is expected to further recover this year.

*From <https://english.news.cn/> 09/22/2022*

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## **TIMOR-LESTE: ADB Approves \$127 Million in Loans to Improve Dili Water Supply Network**

The Asian Development Bank has approved \$127 million in loans to help Timor-Leste provide safe and reliable water in Dili, the capital city which is home to two-thirds of the country's population. "Rapid urbanization and a growing population in Dili are putting pressure on the city's water resources and facilities," said ADB Country Director for Timor-Leste Sunil Mitra. "The Dili West Water Supply Project will help strengthen the city's water supply network, improve service delivery, and enhance the regulatory environment to deliver safe drinking water." Dili's water treatment and supply infrastructure is operating beyond its design capacity. The

network is subject to high levels of leakage, which coupled with increasing exposure to climate risks has resulted in low levels of service through intermittent water supply and disruptions. The system currently provides an intermittent supply of non-potable water to 30% of Dili's population. To meet the growing demand for an adequate and reliable supply of water, climate-resilient and energy efficient infrastructure upgrades are required. The project will support the development of climate-resilient infrastructure, including 2 water treatment plants, 13 groundwater holes, 5 service reservoirs, and 320 kilometers of new water network mains to deliver potable water from diversified sources such as groundwater and surface water. The project will benefit 36,200 households and commercial establishments in the capital city.

The project will also enhance the operations of state-owned water services utility Bee Timor-Leste (BTL) through the adoption of a gender-sensitive and socially inclusive water services operational plan to support key functions including customer service, human resources, long-term capital investment planning, operations and maintenance, and asset management. In addition, the project will support the development of water services regulatory guidelines for adoption by the government's National Authority for Water and Sanitation. The guidelines will ensure the protection of water resources and enhance the financial sustainability of BTL.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 09/20/2022

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## **VIETNAM: EVN to Invest In \$1 Billion Thermal Power Plant in Cần Thơ**

Vietnam Electricity (EVN) has been accepted as the investor of the US\$1.19 billion Ô Môn III thermal power plant located in Cần Thơ City, under a decision issued by the municipal People's Committee. The EVN is expected to pour VNĐ9.9 trillion (\$428.2 million) into the project and the rest will be mobilised from other sources. The project covers 8,342ha and is valid for 31 years since the decision for leasing land came into effect (2021-2052). Work on the facility is scheduled to start in the first quarter of 2025. It is expected to receive gas in the third quarter of 2027 and join the national power grid in the last quarter of the year. Once completed, the plant will provide electricity for the southern region and help ensure a stable supply for the country. The EVN is also the investor of the Ô Môn I thermal power plant project with a capacity of 660 MW and the Ô Môn IV thermal power plant project with a capacity of 1,050 MW. Ô Môn III Thermal Power Plant Project has a capacity of 1,050MW with a total preliminary investment cost estimate of about VNĐ25 trillion, while Ô Môn IV Thermal Power Plant Project has a total preliminary investment cost estimate of about VNĐ29 trillion. These power projects will use natural gas, located in Ô Môn Power Complex in Cần Thơ City, where site areas have been arranged for project construction. Both projects are important in ensuring the south's power supply in the coming years.

From <https://vietnamnews.vn> 09/08/2022

## **Banks Speed Up Disbursement of VNĐ40 Trillion Interest Subsidy Package**

Through credit packages with preferential interest rates, and products and services customised to each customer group's needs, banks focus on helping enterprises access capital to restore production and business. In May the Government issued Decree 31/2022/NĐ-CP on interest rate subsidies for loans given to enterprises, co-operatives and business households. The 2 per cent subsidy offered under the decree and the State Bank of Vietnam's Circular 03/2022/TT-NHNN is one of the most anticipated policies this year. HDBank was one of the first banks to deploy the Government's 2 per cent interest rate subsidy programme worth VNĐ40 trillion (US\$1.69 billion). As soon as it received instructions from the central bank, HDBank promptly issued internal regulations, organised system-wide training courses, including for staff working in transaction points across the country, and actively approached customers and helped them complete the necessary procedures to get the subsidy. HDBank has managed to ensure the support package is provided to the right people, safely, openly, transparently, and in accordance with regulations. In addition, it has earmarked funds to provide loans to efficient projects and production and business plans, especially sectors eligible for interest rate subsidies under the Government's Decree 31/2022/ND-CP.

There is close coordination between the bank and the SBV and relevant ministries and sectors in the implementation of the programme to improve its effectiveness. HDBank's hotline 19006060 functions 24/7 to listen to customers' problems in the process of accessing the subsidy, and provide information to enable them to correctly understand the requisite conditions and stipulations. The bank meanwhile continues to provide credit and other products and services to customers in line with its business strategy and growth targets. It is also taking a number of measures to support other groups of customers and mitigate their difficulties. For instance, it is disbursing a VNĐ10 trillion (\$423.48 million) loan package for workers at half the market interest rate through its finance company HD SAISON. Directed by the SBV and implemented by HDBank and HD SAISON in collaboration with the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour, the programme is expected to help workers and people living in remote areas access formal consumer finance to improve their living standards, and not get into the clutches of loan sharks. In its development process, HDBank always focuses on credit growth associated with good control of credit quality. HDBank is among the lenders to have received a credit limit extension from the SBV. This is a favourable condition for HDBank to further lend to customers who are eligible for interest rate subsidies, thus contributing to implementing the Government and the SBV's policies effectively and promoting the programme for socio-economic recovery and development in 2022-23.

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 09/14/2022*



## State Bank Revises Up Interest Rates by 1 Per Cent from September 23

Governor of the State Bank of Vietnam Nguyễn Thị Hồng has issued decisions on revising up several interest rates by 1 per cent, starting from September 23. Under Decision No 1606/QĐ-NHNN dated September 22, the refinancing interest rate will be set at 5 per cent per year, rediscount at 3.5 per cent, and overnight inter-banking lending rate at 6 per cent. Under another decision, the interest rate for non-term and one-month deposits in Vietnamese đồng is capped at 0.5 per cent annually while that for 1-6 month deposits is 5 per cent. Deposits of 1-6 months at people's credit funds and micro-finance organisations will enjoy an annual interest rate of 5.5 per cent.

### Close watch on FED moves

The State Bank of Vietnam (SBV) will persist in monetary policy management solutions towards macro-economic stability, but closely follow all developments to manage the situation in an appropriate manner, SBV Governor Hồng said, given the Federal Reserve System (Fed)'s latest interest rate increase. According to the governor, after the Fed hiked the interest rate on September 21, currencies in many countries have depreciated against the US dollar, such as the Euro by 1.31 per cent, British pound by 0.95 per cent, and yuan by 0.44 per cent. Since the beginning of this year, the Japanese yen has depreciated by 25 per cent, the Euro 13.5 per cent, British pound by 20 per cent, and Thai baht 11.95 per cent, while the Vietnamese đồng has depreciated only 3.8 per cent. As of September 21, the US dollar had increased 15 per cent compared to 2021 and 19 per cent year-on-year. This is the highest increase in the past 38 years and is also the reason why other currencies have depreciated sharply against the US dollar. In that context, the Vietnamese currency is still among the least depreciated in the world, Hồng stated. She went on to say that the biggest challenge in macroeconomic administration is to control inflation, although international organisations have assessed that this year, Việt Nam will be able to curb inflation below 4 per cent as per the target set by the National Assembly. The central bank will continue to control the exchange rate, and intervene in the foreign currency market to limit fluctuations and ensure stability.

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 09/24/2022*

## PM Calls for Faster Disbursement of Public Funds

Public investment is essential but has been a governmental weak spot since early this year, according to Prime Minister Phạm Minh Chính. Chính made the remarks at a virtual conference on public disbursement on Monday. Relevant ministries and local authorities from 63 provinces and cities attended the conference online. The PM underscored public investment as an engine of growth, which would contribute

greatly to the accomplishment of economic and social goals, create jobs and improve people's livelihoods, and make new room for sustainable development. However, the slow delivery of public money has been an issue for many years and did not improve much in 2022. Public disbursement still moves slowly in many localities, to the detriment of the goals. The PM urged the authorities to identify the causes of the sluggish allocation of public money and the slow implementation of the Three-National-Target Programme, and come up with solutions to these issues. He also called on the authorities to carry out a review of various aspects of the disbursement process, including management, to detect individuals who failed to disburse public money at a good pace and hold them responsible for the slow-paced delivery.

Those authorities who did well with public money were requested to share their experience with others to help them move faster fiscally. Inspection should be stepped up to ensure transparency, thereby preventing corruption. "Under no circumstances is public money not spent. Failure to spend the money is an act that goes against the people," he said. Against a backdrop of global uncertainties, the PM called for a well-calibrated combination of monetary policy, fiscal policy and other policies to regulate the economy. He said the Government has set out the rule of "four to stabilise, three to enhance, two to accelerate, one to reduce and one to say no to" in this regard. The "two to accelerate" involves favourable policies that accelerate business activities and public disbursement. Deputy Minister of Planning and Investment Trần Quốc Phương admitted that the delivery of public money in the first nine months achieved just 46.7 per cent of the target set by the PM. He said the figures are indicative of a regular pattern in public disbursement: construction works are carried out early in the year and payments are made later.

The deputy minister suggested a to-do list to speed up public spending for the rest of 2022. First, relevant ministries and local authorities must comply strictly with governmental instructions and keep their mind on key projects to ensure the projects move without hindrances. Relevant ministries and local authorities must refine legal documents on public investment and bring them to bear stringently to end violators. Supervision and inspection must be stepped up to add to the effect. Ministries and local authorities must precipitate administrative reforms and facilitate the use of information technology in public investment procedures, especially in approval processing. They must draw up their plan on public investment for the period from 2021 to 2025 and list newly-launched projects in 2023 in order of priority to ensure smooth public disbursement. Four organisations in charge of the two National Target Programmes on new-style rural area building and socio-economic development in ethnic minority and mountainous areas must quickly report to the PM on their progress. Relevant ministries and local authorities must cooperate closely and give feedback on public money management. Their feedback would help improve the process and ensure no projects are behind schedule. Lastly, relevant ministries and local authorities must work to prepare the way for in-waiting projects to be carried out

in right early 2023. Public money must be spent during the period without delays.

According to the Ministry of Finance, total public disbursement topped VNĐ253 trillion by late September, up 16 per cent year-on-year. Of which, central government's disbursement hit roughly VNĐ90 trillion, about 37.8 per cent of the target set by the PM. Only two central agencies and ten local authorities went ahead of the curve in this regard with over 70 per cent of the target. Meanwhile, 39 of 51 central agencies and 22 of 63 local authorities fell short of the average rate, at 46.7 per cent. Remarkably, there are 14 central agencies and one local authority that performed poorly with less than 20 per cent.

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 09/27/2022*

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## South Asia

### **INDIA: GIS-23 to Boost FDI in Uttar Pradesh, Help Achieve Rs 10 Lakh Crore Investment Target**

Owing to the sustained efforts of the Yogi Adityanath government in creating an investor-friendly environment in Uttar Pradesh to boost industrial development, the state has become the first choice of foreign investors. Over two dozen countries have invested more than Rs 50,000 crore in the state. Besides, the Global Investors Summit-23 (GIS) to be held in January next year is likely to increase Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) further in the state. The Department of Infrastructure and Industrial Development has set up a dedicated helpdesk for attracting foreign investment. In the last five years, investment proposals worth over Rs 26,371 crore have been received from 12 countries and land has been allotted for about 39 projects. The investment from countries like Singapore, USA, Japan, UK, Canada, Germany and South Korea will provide employment to over 38,000 people in the state. Moreover, companies from Japan, Korea, France, Canada, Taiwan, Belgium, Finland, USA and Sweden have invested under the Uttar Pradesh Electronics Manufacturing Policy 2020 of the IT and Electronics Department. Resultantly, places like Noida and Greater Noida have emerged as the hub of mobile manufacturing. Tegna Electronics Cluster is coming up on 100 acres in Greater Noida. In the next five years, Yamuna Authority (Electronic City), Bundelkhand (Defence Electronics Clusters), and Lucknow-Unnao (Medical Electronics Cluster) will be established by the department. Under the Uttar Pradesh Electronics Manufacturing Policy 2017, an investment of Rs 20,490 crore has been received from foreign investors, whereas under the Uttar Pradesh Electronics Manufacturing Policy 2020, foreign investors have made investment proposals worth Rs 300 crore.

In the last two years, Uttar Pradesh Industrial State Authority (UPCIDA) has received foreign direct investment of Rs 3200 crore from seven different countries. Three companies of the United Kingdom and two companies of the USA have invested Rs

1237 crore and Rs 1237 crore respectively, whereas French firms have invested Rs 307 crore in the state. Besides, companies from Canada and Cyprus as well as two German firms have invested Rs 1.25 crore, Rs 10 crore and Rs 60 crore respectively. The Global Investors Summit-23 (GIS), to be held next year in January, is expected to further boost foreign investment in the state. The government is preparing an action plan in this regard. A letter has been written to 93 embassies, foreign industrial organisations, Ministry of External Affairs and Invest India in this context, seeking maximum information related to investment and industries. Besides, such sectors are also being identified in foreign countries, having more investment potential in the state. In addition, cooperation has also been sought regarding GIS-23. Arvind Kumar said that GIS-23 is going to play a significant role in fulfilling CM Yogi's resolve to make UP a \$1 trillion economy. The investors will be introduced to the merits and specialities of Brand UP and the current policies that are being upgraded keeping in view the foreign investment. During the roadshows, complete information will be given about the policies of the government abroad and the changing environment of the state. Efforts to attract more and more foreign investment will be made. More than two dozen policies are being upgraded by the departments keeping in mind the foreign investors. Besides, several new policies are being worked upon. Once the policies are approved by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in the cabinet, roadshows will be organised abroad, informed Kumar. The policies include Food Processing, Defence and Aerospace Manufacturing, Electronics, MSME, Pharmaceutical Manufacturing, Pharma, Textile Industry, Civil Aviation, Information Technology, Milk, EV and Solar Energy, Tourism, Private Industrial Park, Biofuel, Data Centre, Startup, Integrated Township, Warehousing and Logistics and Electronics Manufacturing Policy 2020. Moreover, new policies like Cyber Security, Uttar Pradesh IT, Animation, VFX, Gaming and Comics (AVGC), and MRO policy, among others are also being formulated.

From <https://egov.eletsonline.com> 09/10/2022

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## **FFS Amount Allocation Records a CAGR of over 21 % Since 2016, Driving Startup India Scheme**

The Startup India scheme which was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2016 has marked a new achievement. Its embedded project – Fund of Funds for startups (FFS) has committed Rs 7835 crore to Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs) as of 24th September 2022. These AIFs in turn have invested Rs. 11,206 crore in 720 startups. FFS has been playing a monumental role in mobilizing domestic capital in the Indian startup ecosystem. FFS was announced with a corpus of Rs. 10,000 crore. The corpus is to be built up over the 14th and 15th Finance Commission Cycles (FY 2016-2020 and FY 2021-2025) through budgetary support by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India. Under FFS, support is extended to SEBI registered Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs), which in turn invest in startups. FFS

has not only made capital available for startups at the early stage, seed stage, and growth stage but also played a catalytic role in terms of facilitating the raising of domestic capital, reducing dependence on foreign capital, and encouraging homegrown and new venture capital funds. Collectively, the AIFs supported by FFS have a target corpus of over Rs. 48,000 crore. Among the prominent AIFs of leading, startup investment firms supported under FFS are Chiratae Ventures, India Quotient, Blume Ventures, IvyCap, Waterbridge, Omnivore, Aavishkaar, JM Financial, Fireside Ventures, and more.

The amount committed under FFS has seen notable growth over the years recording a CAGR of over 21 per cent since the launch of the Scheme. Furthermore, Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) which is responsible for operationalising the Scheme has undertaken a series of reforms recently to expedite the drawdowns to enable AIFs assisted under FFS to avail accelerated drawdowns. This has created a positive impact and have resulted in year on year (Q1 FY 2021-22 vis-à-vis Q1 FY 2022-23) surge of 100% in the amount of drawdowns. FFS has helped anchor 67 AIFs out of 88 AIFs supported and 38 of these are first-time fund managers which is line with FFS's core objective of anchoring venture capital investments for Indian startups. Investments into eligible startups is approximately 3.7 times FFS disbursements which is well above the minimum stipulated 2 times under the Scheme. Performing startups supported through FFS are showing a valuation increase by more than 10 times with number of them even achieving unicorn status (valuation of over USD 1 billion). Dunzo, CureFit, FreshToHome, Jumbotail, Unacademy, Uniphore, Vogo, Zostel, Zetwerk etc., are some of the notable startups funded through FFS. The returns generated from the success of these startups and the innovation created will remain within the country and facilitate the generation of employment and the creation of wealth.

From <https://egov.eletsonline.com> 09/27/2022

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## **India's Data Capacity Getting Doubled, to Attract USD 20 Billion Investments by 2025**

CBRE South Asia Pvt. Ltd, India's leading real estate consulting firm, has announced the findings of its latest report, "Data Centres in India: Powering Up Real Estate in a 'Data-High' Era". According to the report, Data Centre (DC) investments in India are expected to surpass USD 20 billion by 2025. The growing digitalisation, coupled with a strong government policy impetus, has led to a surge in demand for DCs in India. In addition, OTT, online gaming, increased smartphone usage, e-commerce, online schooling by EdTech platforms, location-agnostic work, along with advanced technologies including machine learning, 5G, blockchain, and artificial intelligence, has led to a multi-fold jump in data transmission and need for high spec servers. The report also highlights that in H1 2022, the DC stock in India exceeded 9 million sq. ft. with a 600+ MW capacity in India. It is expected that the DC capacity will almost

double by 2024, with more than 400 MW currently under construction across cities in India. Mumbai is expected to lead the supply addition, followed by Bangalore, Chennai, and Delhi-NCR. Mumbai led in terms of pan-India DC stock, accounting for a share of about 48%, followed by Bangalore at about 18%, along with Chennai (9%), which is now gradually becoming one of the fastest growing DC markets in India. Together, these three cities accounted for nearly 75% of India's DC footprint. In addition, Delhi-NCR, Pune, Hyderabad, and Kolkata accounted for the remaining 25% of the DC market in India. Speaking on the development, Anshuman Magazine, Chairman & CEO – India, South-East Asia, Middle East & Africa, CBRE, said, "With businesses across sectors expanding their digital infrastructure, DCs are becoming increasingly important as a larger alternate real estate class. Following policy refinement on the government's part, the DC segment in India is expected to continue to grow. Tier II and III cities are also expected to see a rise in demand. As a result, we anticipate heightened DC growth and continued interest from investors looking to capitalize on the attractiveness of DCs as an alternative real estate investment option."

According to the report, hyperscale DCs majorly dominated investments during 2018-2021 with a share of about 77% – a similar trend was recorded in H1 2022. Moreover, investments in hyperscale DCs were majorly spread across the top states, with West Bengal leading with a share of 22%, followed by Uttar Pradesh (19%), Telangana (16%), and Tamil Nadu (8%). On the other hand, more than half of investments announced in colocation DCs were across India, while the remaining half was split between the key states of Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, and Telangana. The report also highlighted that the industry is focusing on white space strategies in order to future-proof itself. White space is the space allocated in DCs for IT equipment, including servers, storage, network gear, racks, cooling units, and power distribution systems. Currently, white space accounts for approximately 78% of the total infrastructure investment worldwide. Along with scalability, speed to market and migration strategies, DC owners and operators should also pay close attention to three crucial implementation processes: risk management, consistency, and execution timing. The report stated that considering DCs' high energy consumption, ESG adoption has become a necessity. Although DCs have historically had a high carbon footprint, they offer a valuable path towards a greener, more sustainable world. The report highlighted that DCs could switch to green and renewable energy sources, reuse excess heat and rethink how they are designed, managed & disposed of, right through to end-of-life. However, very few DC operators in India have installed renewable energy sources due to a lack of standard norms. In 2016, the Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) created a pilot version of the 'Green Data Centre Rating System' to address this issue. Further, the IGBC has framed a 'Renewable Energy Standard for DCs in India' in collaboration with the Uptime Institute to encourage DC operators to invest in renewable energy. In addition, AI and Machine Learning are transforming the traditional DC industry to ensure cost-effective sustainability.

## **MALDIVES: ADB Approves \$10 Million to Strengthen Booster and Pediatric COVID-19 Vaccination**

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$10 million grant under its Asia Pacific Vaccine Access Facility to help Maldives upgrade storage facilities and strengthen the distribution and administration of COVID-19 vaccines. “Maldives has attained early success with its COVID-19 vaccination program in 2021. ADB’s support aims to improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the ongoing booster and pediatric COVID-19 vaccination as well as routine immunization,” said ADB Health Specialist for South Asia Dai-Ling Chen. “This project will fill gaps in the vaccination system by enhancing vaccine cold storage, delivery, monitoring and management capacity of the country.”

Through the government’s Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI), more than 70% of Maldives’ population has received the first two COVID-19 vaccine doses while nearly 30% has received at least one booster shot as of mid-September. Booster vaccination is ongoing and has recently been extended to cover people aged 12–49. The government is also planning to expand initial two-dose vaccination to 5–11 year-olds starting September. The project will construct a central cold storage facility in Hulhumalé that is climate-resilient and powered by renewable energy, replacing the temporary facility in Malé. This comes with adequate space to properly store vaccines, medical supplies, and laboratory equipment. There will be dedicated areas for repairing and maintaining cold chain equipment, managing vaccine waste, and hosting a backup server for national immunization data.

To improve the distribution of vaccines and medical goods across Maldives, the project will provide 7 speed boats (1 each for the 6 regions and 1 for the Greater Malé area), 2 refrigerated trucks, and 2 vans for immunization services in the Greater Malé area. ADB’s financing will promote the digitalization of vaccine information management by providing equipment to set up a national health data center and mobile devices for public health staff collecting data at all health centers. This will help link the national health networks to all islands, atolls, and the Greater Malé area. The project will help build the human resource capacity of the EPI, national health data center, and the biomedical service unit to effectively manage COVID-19 vaccination and routine immunization programs. Newly hired staff of the Ministry of Health will receive specialized training while current EPI staff and other health care workers involved in immunization initiatives will be trained on vaccination and disease control.

ADB has earlier supported Maldives’ COVID-19 response, including through a \$50 million COVID-19 Active Response and Expenditure Support Program for the

government's budgetary needs in mitigating the social and economic impacts of the pandemic, two grants with a total value of \$1.5 million under the Asia Pacific Disaster Relief Fund to procure emergency medical goods and supplies, and a \$2 million technical assistance under the Japan Fund for Prosperous and Resilient Asia and the Pacific for developing long-term pandemic response and COVID-19 vaccination plans.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 09/15/2022

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## Central-West Asia

### **AZERBAIJAN: Expects Population's Revenue Growth for Foreseeable Future**

The revenues and expenses of Azerbaijan's population is projected to grow in 2023 and in the next three years, Trend reports citing the Finance Ministry's statement regarding the preliminary indicators of the consolidated and state budgets for 2023. According to forecasts, the population's income will reach 91.9 billion manat (\$53.99 billion), whereas expenditures will stand at 89.2 billion manat (\$52.4 billion) in 2026.

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### **Azerbaijan to Allocate Additional Funding for Education**

The state budget expenses of Azerbaijan on education is projected at 4.4 billion manat (\$2.58 billion) in 2023, Trend reports citing the Finance Ministry's statement regarding the preliminary indicators of the consolidated and state budgets for 2023. The forecasted figure exceeds 2022's indicator by 517.2 million manat (\$303.9 million) or 13.3 percent.

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### **New Insurance Regulations Designed to Improve Azerbaijani Insurer Satisfaction – CBA**

The new insurance regulations, adopted by the Central Bank of Azerbaijan, are designed to improve insurer satisfaction, Director of the Insurance Activity Policy and Supervision Department of the Central Bank of Azerbaijan (CBA) Vusal Gurbanov told reporters, Trend reports. According to him, the upgraded insurance legislation will result in better quality insurance services for Azerbaijani citizens. "Two of innovations under consideration are the new rules and regulation tools of the 'Compulsory civil liability insurance of vehicle owners'. One of them is the direct regulation of damage, which will come into force on November 1, 2022. This procedure is supposed to contain a citizen's insurance claim to the company for



coverage or compensation for a covered loss or policy event. According to the analysis, the relevant rule will serve to increase policyholder satisfaction," the director said. Gurbanov added that the other rule is determining insurance premiums for the mentioned type. "The purpose is calling for the safest possible driving, given the likelihood of causing harm to a third party. The amendment will depend on several risk factors, which means a more precise risk-based approach. The corresponding rule will enter into force on October 1, 2022," he stated.

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## **Azerbaijan Determines Excise Tax Rate for E-Cigarettes**

The excise rate for products containing tobacco or reconstituted tobacco intended for electronic cigarettes has been determined in Azerbaijan, Trend reports. The Cabinet of Ministers has made relevant changes to the "Excise duties for imported excise goods into the Republic of Azerbaijan". An excise tax rate of 14 manat (\$8.2) has been set for 1,000 units of the product. The corresponding decision will enter into force 30 days after its publication.

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## **Azerbaijan Expanding Auto Exchange of Financial, Country Data with Other Countries**

The number of countries with which Azerbaijan has automatic exchange of financial and country-related reports, has increased, State Tax Service (STS) under the Ministry of Economy of Azerbaijan told Trend. The automatic exchange of financial statements has been established with 116 countries, while the exchange of country-by-country reports has been arranged with 91 countries. Azerbaijan joined the agreements on the automatic exchange of financial reporting data in 2017, and the multilateral agreement on the exchange of country-by-country reporting – in 2021. "At the initial stage, the number of countries engaged in the automatic exchange of financial statements amounted to 90, subsequently reaching 99. The exchange of country-specific reports has initially been established with 89 countries," the State Tax Service said.

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## **Azerbaijan Names Average Interest Rate on Mortgage Loans**

Azerbaijan has the most favorable mortgage lending conditions for citizens in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Director of the Mortgage Loans Department of Azerbaijan's Mortgage and Credit Guarantee Fund Rasim Abdullayev said during media training, Trend reports. According to him, the average cost of

housing purchased through mortgage lending is 102,000 manat (\$60,000), the average loan amount is 70,000 manat (\$41,176), and the average annual interest rate is 6.2 percent. The average interest rate on mortgage loans is 6.67 percent in Russia and 8.41 percent in Kazakhstan. The Mortgage and Credit Guarantee Fund was established following the Presidential Decree in 2017 through the reorganization and merger of Azerbaijan Mortgage Fund OJSC and Azerbaijan Credit Guarantee Fund OJSC.

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## **Azerbaijan Tightening Measures to Combat Illegal Money Transfers**

Criminal prosecution of individuals who organize transfer of funds in the amount of more than 50,000 manat (\$29,410) through compensation or other methods of mutual settlements, without signs of a crime under Azerbaijan's Criminal Code's article on smuggling is envisioned in the country, Trend reports. The relevant amendments to the Criminal Code have been discussed at a meeting of the Azerbaijani parliament. According to the amendments, the commission of these acts by an official using his official position, or on a large scale, is considered as an aggravating circumstance. In recent years, law enforcement agencies have identified cases of illegal money transfers. The perpetrators of these acts, acting through their own network, both within the country and abroad, committed illegal money transfers between Azerbaijan and foreign countries, thus creating conditions for the uncontrolled withdrawal of large foreign exchange funds from the country, damaging the financial and economic stability of the country, and leading to the expansion of money laundering mechanisms. The bill established the amount of fines provided for the commission of these acts by introducing appropriate amendments to Article 190 of the Criminal Code of Azerbaijan. At the same time, the bill proposed to introduce criminal law measures against legal entities for committing acts provided for in Article 206-1 of the Criminal Code. After discussions, the amendments were put to a vote and adopted.

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## **TAJKISTAN: ADB Provides Funding for Education Development**

Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$1 million technical assistance grant to help the Tajikistan government improve access and quality of secondary education in the country, Trend reports citing the ADB's press service. The bank will support developing a feasibility study for an ensuing investment project to strengthen the secondary education (5 to 11 grades) in science, technology, engineering and mathematics throughout the country. "Merging science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, emphasizes collaboration, communication, research, problem-solving,

critical thinking, and creativity - skills that students need to become more employable and succeed regardless of specific career goals," the ADB said. Since Tajikistan joined ADB in 1998, the bank has become the country's largest development partner with over \$2.3 billion in total assistance.

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## Oceania

### **AUSTRALIA: Graduates with Student Debt Facing Significant Hike to Loan Repayments**

Australian university graduates could soon be staring down a significant increase to their student debt in the midst of rising inflation. Earlier this year, Australians who were yet to pay off their HECS-HELP debt were slogged with the highest increase to the indexation rate in decades, at 3.9 per cent. HECS-HELP debts don't accrue interest, but the loan amount is adjusted each year by the indexation rate. This accounts for inflation which, at the time of the indexation rate being applied, was the highest in two decades. It's since jumped another point to 6.1 per cent in the year to June, meaning next year's increase to the indexation rate is likely to be worse. Updated inflation figures for the September quarter are due at the end of next month. Prior to the pandemic, the indexation rate for HECS-HELP debts hovered around 2 per cent.

According to Australian Tax Office data, there were 2.9 million people with outstanding HECS-HELP debt in 2020-21. The average amount of outstanding debt per person was \$23,685 - up from \$23,280 the previous year. Research conducted earlier this year by progressive think tank the Australia Institute made the case for free undergraduate education. Australia Institute economist and the report's author Eliza Littleton said: "As devastating as the pandemic has been for Australia's universities, the sector was being distorted and damaged by corporatisation, casualisation, and privatisation long before COVID arrived. "Australia needs an ambitious national vision for higher education that re-aligns the sector with its public service mission, and with the needs of students, staff, and wider society." For the time being, however, anyone with a HELP loan will begin paying it off at a rate of 1 per cent once they earn at least \$48,361. Under the 2022-23 thresholds, the more they earn, the higher the rate of repayment. It increases incrementally to a rate of 10 per cent for those earning above \$141,848.

From <https://7news.com.au> 09/16/2022

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### **\$46 Million to Revolutionize Household Food and Garden Waste**

Food and garden waste from an additional two million households will be kept out of

landfill through a new \$46 million grants program for councils. Minister for Environment James Griffin said the new food organics and garden organics (FOGO) collection service will revolutionise household waste services and help NSW reach its target of net-zero emissions from organic waste in landfill by 2030. “Almost half of the waste in red lid bins in NSW is food and garden waste that can be diverted from landfill and turned into a valuable resource,” Mr Griffin said. “In NSW, more than a third of the waste we send to landfill is food, and Australia ranks fourth highest in the world when it comes to the amount of food we waste. “When FOGO waste ends up in landfill, it rots and generates damaging greenhouse gasses. Through our \$46 million Go FOGO grant program, we’re leading the way and supporting more councils around the State to divert organics from landfill.

“Go FOGO will divert half a million tonnes of waste and instead see it processed into compost and used in large scale agriculture, parks or gardens where it can improve soil health and boost yields. “FOGO is helping households and councils in NSW reduce emissions, make the most of a valuable resource, and save money on landfill disposal costs.” More than 40 councils already have FOGO services thanks to NSW Government investment of \$28 million in FOGO programs since 2013, diverting more than 210,000 tonnes of organic waste annually. The NSW Government has also invested in a complementary infrastructure program that supported the construction or upgrade of 30 waste processing facilities, increasing NSW processing capacity for food and garden waste by 600,000 tonnes a year. Minister for Local Government Wendy Tuckerman said NSW councils will now have the ability to provide the service to their residents through the new Go FOGO grants.

“This fantastic initiative will directly support councils to improve their waste collection services and send less waste to landfill,” Mrs Tuckerman said. “Councils will also have the ability to use the funding in ways that suit the needs of the community. For example, to purchase bins and caddies, conduct audits, provide education or implement trials. “We know communities in NSW that have FOGO already love it, and these new grants are about supporting councils to rollout this new waste service that helps our environment while creating a valuable agricultural resource.” The grants are funded through the NSW Government’s \$356 million Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041. Through it, a total of \$69 million has been allocated to 2027 to divert organics waste from landfill, and new programs are also being developed to increase food donation and support businesses to recycle food waste. Grants will be open to councils for applications twice a year for four years, with funding available on a per household basis. Applications for the first round of grants close on 16 November.

From <https://afndaily.com.au> 09/22/2022

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## **\$9 Million to Turbocharge Plastic Recycling**

More plastic will be recycled and turned into new products in NSW thanks to \$9 million funding to support businesses transform their operations and access the latest plastic recycling technology. Minister for the Environment James Griffin said the new Circular Plastics Program, part of the Circular Materials Fund, is all about boosting the circular economy for plastics in NSW. “This program is a game changer for our State because it means we’ll be reducing the amount of plastic going to landfill, and turning it into a valuable resource instead,” Mr Griffin said. “At the moment, NSW produces about 800,000 tonnes of plastic waste every year, and about 10 per cent is recycled. That figure should be much higher and I want to see plastic being repurposed and reused as many times as possible, rather than ending up in landfill or the environment.

“Through this \$9 million program, we’re giving eligible businesses the support they need to recycle and reuse more plastic when making new products. “This is business and government working together to create a cleaner future, and generate new market demand and value for recycled plastic.” The Circular Plastics Program is part of the NSW Government’s target to triple the plastics recycling rate by 2030 and will be delivered by the NSW Environment Protection Authority. The matched funding will support small and medium businesses that may otherwise be challenged by initial capital costs involved in creating circularity in their business. The program is part of the NSW Government’s \$356 million Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041, and the NSW Plastics Action Plan.

From <https://afndaily.com.au> 09/24/2022

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## **\$1.1 Million Firefighting Boost for the Blue Mountains**

Rural Fire Brigades in the Blue Mountains are benefitting from the delivery of three new appliances, worth a combined \$1.1 million, ahead of the official Bush Fire Danger Period beginning on 1 October. Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience Steph Cooke joined Rural Fire Service (RFS) staff and volunteers at Katoomba today to hand over the keys to Category 1 tankers for the Blaxland, Hazelbrook and Lawson Brigades. “Each of these appliances, worth \$385,000, will assist our volunteers in providing an even greater level of fire protection to the local community,” Ms Cooke said. “The Blaxland, Hazelbrook and Lawson Brigades are very active and do a wonderful job protecting people and property in one of our State’s most bush fire prone areas, as well as responding to building fires, vehicle accidents, and storm and flood responses.

“I am confident the new state-of-the-art appliances will prove to be invaluable assets, ensuring volunteers have access to modern firefighting technology when responding to fires and other incidents.” RFS Acting District Manager, Inspector Rob Vinzenz, said the efforts of volunteers do not go unnoticed and the new Category 1 tankers will support their work. “The men and women of the RFS remain on-hand 24 hours a day,

seven days a week, and we should be extremely proud and grateful for their contribution,” Inspector Vinzenz said. Since the 2019-20 Black Summer bush fires, the NSW Government has funded more than 400 fire trucks for RFS Brigades across the State.

From <https://afndaily.com.au> 09/29/2022

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## **NEW ZEALAND: Successful Funding for COVID-19 Research Round Announced**

Researchers from across New Zealand have received funding to undertake research into the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 and future pandemic responses. “Our response to COVID-19 has always been science led therefore it is crucial that we fund projects that give us insights into how whānau, communities and the health system responded to the COVID-19 pandemic and vaccine rollout. “I am pleased to announce that 23 research projects involving staff from universities, Māori and Pacific research organisations, health and disability providers, Crown Research Institutes and Te Whatu Ora Health New Zealand, were successful in their applications for funding. “Each project is being funded for 12 months and their research will explore the impacts of the pandemic on the population as a whole, as well as the specific experiences of Kaupapa Māori health providers, our Māori and Pacific communities, the disability sector, and people living rurally or in aged residential care.

“Upon completion we expect the projects to have gathered important insights including how best to support the work of Kaupapa Māori health providers, tailor pandemic control for aged residential care facilities and improve our guidance about ventilation of spaces used by our most vulnerable communities. “This will give us insights into things such as long COVID, childhood immunisation and the pandemic’s overall impacts,” said Dr Ayesha Verrall. Each project was allocated funding of between \$200,000 and \$500,000. Funding comes from the COVID-19 health system response and the National Immunisation Programme. “The rigorous selection process is a good example of the reformed health system working together to set priorities and build on the evidence-based approach we have taken to the pandemic,” said Dr Ayesha Verrall.

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 09/06/2022

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## **Investment Sector – NZ Super Fund Shifts \$25 Billion to Low Carbon Indices in Sustainability Push**

The NZ Super Fund has shifted about 40% of its overall investment portfolio to market indices that align with the Paris Agreement, the international climate change treaty. The changes apply to the Fund’s index-tracking Reference Portfolio

benchmark and its corresponding \$25 billion of passive investments in global equities. Chief Investment Officer Stephen Gilmore says: "In addition to alignment with climate goals, we expect these new indices to deliver better environmental, social and governance (ESG) metrics across the board." The changes will further reduce the Fund's exposure to carbon emissions. They will also significantly reduce the number of publicly listed companies that the Fund owns directly. "A smaller, more concentrated portfolio will be cheaper to run, and more manageable for us when looking to identify and engage on responsible investment issues," says Mr Gilmore.

"Making this shift in a way that will not have a detrimental impact on investment returns has been critical for us. The move follows many months of technical analysis weighing up a range of risk, return, cost and implementation considerations. We're confident Fund performance will not be adversely affected and see both cost and efficiency benefits in the changes. The new indices provide a simple, off-the-shelf solution for our passive benchmark and holdings." The Fund first reduced its exposure to carbon emissions and reserves in 2017, using a bespoke methodology. Since then it has reduced Fund-wide emissions intensity by nearly 50% and no longer holds any material, long-term exposure to fossil fuel reserves, while Fund performance has remained strong. Earlier this year a study by the independent think-tank Global SWF found the NZ Super Fund, with an 11.79 per cent return over the past six years, was the top performing sovereign wealth fund globally.

The Fund is a signatory to the Paris Aligned Investment Initiative's Net Zero Asset Owners Commitment, under which it has agreed to make reductions in portfolio carbon footprint in line with a globally-accepted pathway. Mr Gilmore said the Fund would be reporting on progress towards net zero annually under a framework for the New Zealand Crown Financial Institutions, as agreed with the Minister of Finance last year. The changeover to the MSCI World Climate Paris Aligned Index and the MSCI Emerging Markets Climate Paris Aligned Index commenced in June, with the new benchmark taking effect on 1 July 2022. The Fund previously tracked a custom version of the MSCI All Country World Investible Market Total Return Index. Implementation is now largely complete. The Paris Aligned indices are designed to support investors seeking to reduce their exposure to transition and physical climate risks and who wish to pursue opportunities arising from the transition to a lower-carbon economy while aligning with the Paris Agreement requirements.

The MSCI World Climate Paris Aligned Index is based on the MSCI World Index, its parent index, and includes large and midcap securities across 23 developed market countries. The MSCI Emerging Markets Climate Paris Aligned Index is based on the MSCI Emerging Markets Index, its parent index, and includes large and mid-cap securities across 24 emerging market countries. The Fund will continue to obtain some of its benchmark index exposure via derivative instruments where it is cost effective and efficient to do so. Dr Charles Hyde, Head of Asset Allocation, will speak to the index changes at Top 1000 Funds' Sustainability in Practice forum at Harvard

University on 14 September 2022. Guardians' CEO Matt Whineray is also speaking on the topic and the NZ Super Fund's sustainable finance approach at the ANZ Māori Investor Forum being held in Auckland on 15 September.

Interested investment professionals, industry members and stakeholders will be able to learn more about the changes at an online briefing to be held by the Guardians following the release of its Annual Report in October (date to be advised). Earlier this week the NZ Super Fund reported it was worth \$55.7 billion at 30 June 2022, down from approximately \$59 billion at the end of the previous financial year (-6.99 percent – unaudited, after costs and before NZ tax). However, the Fund significantly out-performed its passive Reference Portfolio benchmark by 7.25 percent, generating a record \$4.5 billion in value add, considerably reducing the impact of the broad market downturn. A carbon footprint of the Fund and updated equity holdings list as at 30 June 2022 will be published in October 2022, in conjunction with the Guardians' Annual Report.

About NZ Super Fund The \$57 billion NZ Super Fund is a global investment fund that was established by the New Zealand Government to help pre-fund universal superannuation. A long-term, growth oriented investor, the Fund has returned 10% p.a. since inception in 2003, and currently has more than \$6 billion invested in New Zealand, including significant stakes in Kaingaroa Timberlands, Datacom, Kiwibank, Fidelity Life and NZ Gourmet, as well as significant investment in a range of locally listed companies.

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 09/14/2022

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## **Depositor Compensation Scheme Protects Kiwis' Money**

New Zealanders will have up to \$100,000 of their deposits in any eligible institution guaranteed in the event that institution fails, under legislation introduced in Parliament today. The Deposit Takers Bill is the third piece of legislation in a comprehensive review of the Reserve Bank of New Zealand Act and follows the Reserve Bank of New Zealand (Monetary Policy) Amendment Act 2018, which changed the objectives and decision making process for monetary policy, and the Reserve Bank of New Zealand Act 2021, which dealt with institutional arrangements for the Reserve Bank. The Bill has been the subject of two rounds of public consultation. It brings all deposit takers (such as banks, credit unions, building societies and finance companies) under one set of rules and protects New Zealanders' money through the introduction of a depositor compensation scheme.

“The absence of depositor protection has been a long-standing gap in New Zealand's financial safety net. This legislation closes that gap and brings New Zealand in line with international practices,” Grant Robertson said. “It provides economic security for eligible New Zealanders if their bank or other deposit taking



institution fails while helping protect the country's financial system and wider economy. "The \$100,000 limit has been doubled after consultation and will fully protect 93 percent of depositors. "The scheme will be pre-funded by levies on deposit takers and supported by a Crown backstop. "Officials are currently exploring options for setting the required size of the fund. Approaches taken by other countries range from 0.3 percent to 5 percent of covered deposits built up over a five to 20 year period.

"The levy is also expected to be risk-based, with deposit takers paying different rates depending on an assessment of the risks they pose, which will encourage them to avoid excessive risk-taking that may financially harm Kiwis," Grant Robertson said. The Bill also gives the Reserve Bank the ability to set standards as the main tool for imposing prudential requirements and modernises the regulation and supervision of all deposit takers and strengthens New Zealand's financial crisis framework. "The Reserve Bank will have stronger and a broader range of supervisory and enforcement powers to ensure compliance and avoid breaches," Grant Robertson said. "Taken together, the recommendations will considerably strengthen New Zealand's financial system safety net and contribute to a robust framework of protections for depositors. It also brings our protections into line with those in place overseas."

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## **More Medicines for New Zealanders, Thanks to Govt's Budget Boost**

Health Minister Andrew Little is welcoming news that two more important medicines are set to be funded, thanks to the Government's big boost to the country's medicines budget. "Since coming into Government in 2017, the Labour Government has increased Pharmac's funding by 43 per cent, including a \$71 million boost this year and another \$120 million increase next year," Andrew Little said. "This morning, the Government medicines funding agency Pharmac announced that, subject to public consultation, it will fully fund a medicine for spinal muscular atrophy, as well as adrenaline auto-injectors for people at risk of anaphylaxis, or life-threatening allergic reactions. "This is good news. More than 12,000 New Zealanders at risk of anaphylaxis could benefit from access to the adrenaline auto-injectors within the first year of funding, increasing to 17,000 a year within five years.

"The spinal muscular atrophy medicine nusinersen (marketed as Spinraza) will, if it goes ahead, be the first medicine to be publically funded for spinal muscular atrophy. "It could make a substantial difference to the lives of the young people who receive it, and is in line with the recommendations of the Government-ordered review of Pharmac, which said more work should be done on funding medicines for people with rare disorders. "In New Zealand, decisions about which medicines are publicly

funded are made by medical experts through Pharmac, and not by politicians, and that's as it should be. "Despite dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Labour Government has managed to make good progress on increasing the number of medicines and treatments available to New Zealanders. "I am pleased to see that so far, Pharmac has used this year's Budget increase to fund three new treatments, has increased access to 14, and is considering proposals to fund another eight new medicines. "And as a result of this Government's funding increases since 2017, Pharmac has been able to make an extra 189 funding decisions, including 59 new listings and the widening of access to 130 treatments."

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 09/28/2022

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## **PALAU: ADB Approves \$30 Million Loan to Boost Recovery from COVID-19**

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$30 million policy-based loan to help Palau's economy rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic under the Recovery through Improved Systems and Expenditure Support Program. "The second and final subprogram of this policy-based operation will help restore Palau to a sustainable fiscal path that it was on before the pandemic hit," said ADB Public Sector Economist and Program Team Leader Rommel Rabanal. "Over the medium to longer term, the reforms under this program will promote more sustained and equitable growth in Palau's tourism-driven economy." The subprogram 2 supports Palau's efforts to implement a suite of reforms, anchored on recently adopted landmark legislations establishing an overarching fiscal responsibility framework and pursuing a comprehensive tax reform. These reforms will help safeguard fiscal sustainability during Palau's recovery from the impacts of COVID-19.

The subprogram also has a strong gender equality focus through its planned rollout of tax reform, which ensures that women have access to tailored information and services that will help them harness expanded business opportunities. It will also modernize and streamline processes for registering new companies and help reduce the financial and time costs of starting a business. The program builds on previous ADB policy-based operations and public sector management work in Palau, and supports strengthening governance and institutional capacity, one of ADB's priorities under Strategy 2030. The program was developed in coordination with the International Monetary Fund to ensure macroeconomic stability during the pandemic.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 09/01/2022

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## **6、 Private Sector**

**Asia-Pacific**

## **Deputy Prime Minister Supattanapong Punmeechaow's Statement on the APEC Small and Medium Enterprises Ministerial Meeting**

This morning, Supattanapong Punmeechaow, Thailand Deputy Prime Minister and Vice Chairman of the Thailand Board of SME Promotion, shared with ministers and high-level representatives from APEC's 21 member economies a statement that reflects the outcomes of the 28th Meeting of APEC Small and Medium Enterprises, which he chaired on 9-10 September 2022. The statement mapped the wide range of issues faced by startups and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the APEC region, and elaborated some solutions which were discussed by the ministers. These are encapsulated in the meeting's theme—"Inclusive Recovery of APEC MSMEs through the Bio-Circular-Green Economy Model and a High Impact Ecosystem."

Read the 2022 APEC Small and Medium Enterprises Ministerial Meeting Chair's Statement

During the meeting, ministers said they will continue to foster economic growth, which benefits everyone, including small businesses and startups. They will help small businesses participate in the global economy and intend to restore and improve the connectivity among APEC economies through digital resilience, which will help MSMEs flourish and in turn contribute to the region's recovery.

As laid out in the chair's statement, the membership have agreed to do this by supporting of the following points in bold text:

**Acceleration of the Region's Adoption of the Bio-Circular-Green Economy Model – Going bio-circular-green can open business opportunities and add value to the products and services of small businesses, while adding to the global effort to address climate change. Inclusive Digital Transformation – Digitalization affords small enterprises the tools to develop faster. MSMEs with digital skills can reach more customers, and are more resilient against disruptions such as the restrictions imposed under the COVID-19 pandemic.**

**Financing and Debt Restructuring – MSMEs have difficulty borrowing "because they are small, less diversified and may have weaker financial structures." Giving a small business access to finance liberates its potential, so ministers are encouraging measures to address lending constraints. Coping with an Evolving Market Landscape – A business environment that encourages startups, fosters innovation, promotes participation in global value chains, and empowers women and youth entrepreneurs, among others, will help MSMEs thrive and become more competitive.** The statement also demonstrates how APEC's MSMEs ministers recognize that economic goals should include not just growth, but the wellbeing of people, inclusion, equity, as well as sustainability.

From <https://www.apec.org/> 09/10/2022

## **Ministers Aim for Recovery, Resilience for Asia-Pacific's Small Business**

Minister-level officials and high-level representatives from APEC member economies met to put in place a plan for the crucial recovery of the region's micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), which were heavily impacted by lockdowns and restrictions over the past two years, and which continue to struggle in the post-pandemic world. They convened in Phuket physically for the first time since 2019. This gathering of ministers concluded a week of engagements between officials, experts and entrepreneurs around the region who exchanged views on best policy practices in support of small business. "The COVID-19 pandemic had brought about devastation to MSME businesses as they were impacted by supply chain disruption, market relocation and financial losses," said Supattanapong Punmeechaow, Thailand Deputy Prime Minister and Vice Chairman of the Thailand Board of SME Promotion, who served as chair of the meeting. "Against their liquidity shortage, MSMEs also needed to make new investments in reskilling their workforce towards digital mode of services and productions." Minister Supattanapong acknowledged that even as the economy is reopening, small enterprises face new challenges.

"At the time we are currently convening, the world somehow has moved away from the COVID-19 pandemic, yet to confront an emerging global situation with adverse impacts on our MSMEs at no lesser intensity than the pandemic," he said. Minister Supattanapong referred to small businesses as "the driving engine of the APEC economies." "MSMEs account for 98 percent of total businesses in the APEC region and 40 to 60 percent of GDP in most APEC economies," he said, citing data gathered by APEC MSME officials. "Without their inclusive recovery, we will not be able to achieve resilient and balanced economic growth." Ministers discussed four ways to drive this growth: accelerating the adoption of the bio-circular-green economy model; encouraging inclusive digital transformation; giving MSMEs access to financing while restructuring debt; and helping them cope with the evolving market landscape. According to Dr Rebecca Sta Maria, Executive Director of the APEC Secretariat, MSMEs faced a variety of challenges even before COVID-19, such as sustainability, financing, and market access. "The pandemic has only made their situation more complex," she said. She outlined the next steps for APEC to support MSMEs, such as helping them become more competitive in the global marketplace.

"MSMEs that export grow significantly faster than those that don't," Dr Sta Maria said. "Research indicates that SMEs in developing economies can increase productivity and innovation by selling abroad. Yet, despite the various initiatives undertaken, it appears that there is more to be done to facilitate MSMEs' access and integration into global supply and value chains." "There is much in our to-do list," she continued,

“but we can achieve this through effective partnerships and cooperation, including between the public and private sectors, specifically, the APEC Business Advisory Council, and other regional and international organizations, and key stakeholders, including civil society.”

Currently, there are 23 projects and initiatives being implemented by APEC to address the challenges faced by the MSME sector with an emphasis on supporting their resilience and recovery in every aspect of business. These initiatives are guided by APEC’s long-term vision for the next 20 years—the Putrajaya Vision 2040 and the Aotearoa Plan of Action—and current priorities under Thailand’s APEC hosting, such as efforts towards encouraging a bio-circular-green economy. Upon concluding his remarks, Minister Supattanapong gave reassurance to MSMEs in APEC economies by quoting the theme of APEC 2022: “The APEC region will remain open to all opportunities, connected to all dimensions and balanced in all aspects so that they can leverage on the regional economic growth.”

From <https://www.apec.org/> 09/10/2022

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## **APEC Boosts SMEs’ Competitiveness Through Health Ethics Pacts**

APEC is ramping up efforts to strengthen the competitiveness of the region’s small businesses in the health sector through the expansion of public-private business ethics pacts. The Business Ethics for APEC SMEs initiative aims to further help small businesses address risks, such as corruption across the health ecosystem, while encouraging them to share best practices, partner with governments to promote ethical business conduct, as well as engage in multistakeholder collaboration. “Micro, small and medium enterprises in the medical device and biopharmaceutical industries played crucial role during the height of the pandemic, ensuring availability of products and services despite the disruptions and challenges,” said Norlela Suhailee, the Chair of the APEC Small and Medium Enterprises Working Group.

“Our small businesses need a transparent and predictable operating environment to deliver lifesaving products, to develop innovative solutions for the future, to operate sustainably and continue their engagement in cross-border trade.” she added. At the 2022 APEC Business Ethics for SMEs Forum, held on 12-13 September in Bangkok, industry associations representing thousands of small businesses in the medical technology and biopharmaceutical sectors joined government, patient organizations, and healthcare providers to contribute to a guide to help stakeholders from member economies coalesce around the implementation of ethics pacts. There are currently 11 agreements for ethical collaboration, which bring together more than 300 organizations representing tens of thousands of small businesses as well as healthcare professionals and patients.

Participants at the forum provided their inputs to the guide, contributing to the development of a suite of resources and best practices to bolster ethical collaboration, including effective governance, operations, communications and sustainability. The new resource guide will be published next year in collaboration with the Basel Institute on Governance. “It is incumbent on all of us to ensure that the region’s health economy is vibrant, innovative, competitive and free of corruption—to foster sustainable growth and to best serve the billions of patients across our markets,” said Marisa Lago, Undersecretary of International Trade at the U.S. Department of Commerce, which oversees the initiative. “Consensus frameworks have the power to unite diverse stakeholders with disparate interests to expand the possibilities of ethical business practices in a given economy,” Lago explained.

Consensus frameworks are critical to advancing ethical business conduct to support small businesses within health systems, and represent each economy’s commitment to strengthening multistakeholder collaboration. This includes adherence to rules within respective health systems and alignment of ethical principles across diverse stakeholders. “Consensus frameworks are voluntary agreements that set the table for building trust across health systems—bringing together diverse stakeholders to simultaneously elevate standards of integrity,” said Thomas Cueni, Director General of International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations. “With a mission to improve standards of governance, the forum’s outcomes well position APEC economies for continued growth and success in ethical collaboration in the health sector and in support of high-quality patient care,” he concluded.

From <https://www.apec.org/> 09/19/2022

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## **Asia Must Improve Digital Environment for Entrepreneurs, New Global Index Shows**

Four-fifths of developing Asian economies place toward the bottom in a global ranking of digital environments and support systems for entrepreneurs, according to a new index developed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Singapore has the world’s best digital environment and support system for entrepreneurs, according to the Global Index of Digital Entrepreneurship Systems, released today as part of the *Asian Development Outlook (ADO) 2022 Update*. The United States ranks second, while Sweden takes third place among 113 economies on the list. But 17 of the 21 developing Asian economies included are ranked toward the bottom—underscoring the need for many of them to nurture digital entrepreneurship.

Digitalization offers big growth opportunities for businesses in Asia and the Pacific. It’s a driver of innovation, which is key for economies striving to achieve high-income status. It can also make economies more resilient, as seen when digital technology helped many businesses survive the COVID-19 pandemic, and it can promote inclusive growth by lowering the cost of starting a business. “Digital entrepreneurship

helped economies stay afloat during the COVID-19 pandemic, and it can become a major engine of growth and innovation in the post-pandemic world,” said ADB Chief Economist Albert Park. “For this to happen, there needs to be a supportive environment enabled by conducive policies and incentives. While the environment for Asia’s digital entrepreneurs made substantial strides in the past couple of years, there’s still a lot of room for improvement.”

The index measures the quality of the environment for digital entrepreneurs by looking at the level of digitalization in eight areas: culture, institutions, market conditions, infrastructure, human capital, knowledge, finance, and networking. In addition to investing in digital infrastructure such as broadband networks, governments need to promote political stability, reliable legal systems, open and competitive markets, and strong property rights. An ADB analysis shows that strong rule of law has a positive effect on enterprise innovation, while less corruption in a society is correlated with an increase in the entry of new entrepreneurs in the market.

For Asia and the Pacific as a whole, an insufficiently supportive culture is among the biggest weak spots when it comes to nurturing digital entrepreneurship. One example is a general lack of public appreciation for the vital role that entrepreneurs play in economic progress. One way to change this is to improve the public perception of entrepreneurship through education. 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.

**Global Index of Digital Entrepreneurship Systems Scores**

	<b>Rank out of 113 global economies</b>	<b>Score (0-100)</b>
Singapore	1	81.3
United States	2	79.7
Sweden	3	79.6
Denmark	4	78.8
Switzerland	5	76.9
Netherlands	6	75.6
Finland	7	73.3
Norway	8	69.9
Luxembourg	9	69.6
United Kingdom	10	69.0
Republic of Korea	22	54.1
Malaysia	27	43.1
People's Republic of	39	35.3

China		
Georgia	50	28.3
Kazakhstan	52	27.4
Armenia	58	26.0
Thailand	59	25.9
Azerbaijan	60	25.5
Viet Nam	63	23.1
Indonesia	71	20.4
India	75	19.6
Philippines	79	18.5
Sri Lanka	82	17.5
Mongolia	84	17.2
Kyrgyz Republic	88	15.2
Tajikistan	95	12.8
Bangladesh	96	12.5
Pakistan	97	12.3
Cambodia	101	12.0
Nepal	104	11.5

From <https://www.adb.org/> 09/21/2022

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## East Asia

### **CHINA: To Scale Up Support for Employment, Entrepreneurship to Expand Space of Employment**

China will step up policy support for employment and business start-ups to broaden the space of employment, help market entities emerge and grow, and foster new drivers of growth, according to a State Council executive meeting chaired by Premier Li Keqiang on Wednesday. The meeting also decided to extend phased government interest discounts on loans for upgrading equipment in some fields, increase credit support for the service sector and introduce phased tax reduction policies to support enterprises to galvanize more investment in enhancing innovation capability. The meeting underscored the fundamental importance of employment to people's well-being. Starting businesses can increase market entities and boost employment. Stable growth is mainly about stable job creation. Local governments must earnestly fulfill their due responsibilities and step up support for employment and business start-ups.

"The current employment situation is generally stable, but there are concerns as well. Local governments must earnestly fulfill their due responsibilities and take some special measures," Li said. Companies will be entitled to job creation subsidies for



hiring college graduates unable to find jobs two years after graduation and the young registered as unemployed. Unemployment insurance benefits will be issued to the jobless in a timely manner. Skills training for migrant workers will be enhanced to help them stay employed. The platform economy will be supported in keeping employment stable. Social insurance subsidies will be provided to people engaged in platform-based flexible employment should they face difficulty and college graduates yet to find jobs two years after graduation. Financial institutions will be guided to extend special loan support to key platform companies. "Unemployment insurance and other support policies must be fully delivered to benefit all those eligible.

The financial sector should support market entities in keeping employment stable and creating jobs by starting businesses," Li said. The repayment of guaranteed start-up loans could be extended for one year if the borrower is in COVID-19-induced distress. Banks will be guided toward offering more credit loans and loan renewals for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. Insurance funds, among others, will be encouraged to invest in venture capital funds in accordance with law. The lock-up period for shareholders of venture capital firms will be fine-tuned, to facilitate investors' fund recovery for reinvestment. Government-financed business incubation bases will provide venues for start-ups free of charge to the best of their ability. "We have sufficient reserves of pension and unemployment insurance funds, and have yet to tap into our strategic reserves. There is no problem with meeting people's basic needs," Li said.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 09/08/2022

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## **China to Further Improve Business Environment, Lower Costs for Companies**

China has rolled out new measures to optimize its business environment, aiming to ease current strains on small businesses and cement the foundations of economic recovery, according to a guideline unveiled on Thursday. The guideline, released by the General Office of the State Council, called for the full implementation of the country's negative list system for market access and the removal of all hidden barriers. China will continue to regulate charges on market entities, including administrative penalties, as well as fees incurred in the usage of power, water, gas and logistic services, the document said. It urged the improvement of services catering to the needs of companies, stressing the importance of stepped-up efforts to upgrade enterprises involved in cross-border trade. Oversight should be further enhanced to protect the legitimate rights and interests of market entities, while the exercise of administrative power should be kept within lawful bounds, according to the document.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 09/15/2022

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## China's Industrial Clusters See Rapid Development

The development of China's industrial clusters accelerated recently, with the output value of 25 advanced manufacturing clusters growing steadily in the first half of the year, an official said on Friday. The 25 advanced manufacturing clusters generated an output value of 6.2 trillion yuan (about 886.73 billion U.S. dollars) in the January-June period, rising 6.1 percent from the same period last year, Wang Wei, an official with the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, told a press conference. These clusters encompass more than 1,000 "little giant" companies, representatives of the novel elites of China's small and medium-sized enterprises that specialize in a niche market, boast cutting-edge technologies, and show great potential. Friday's press conference also showed that China established 445 national-level demonstration zones for new industrialization based on previous development zones and industrial parks. The demonstration zones have contributed nearly 30 percent of the country's total value-added industrial output and more than 30 percent of its imports and exports, serving as a driving force in promoting high-quality development of the regional manufacturing sector, data from the ministry showed.

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## China's Construction Sector in High Gear as Infrastructure Investment Expands

China's construction sector kicked into high gear as the country doubled down on infrastructure investment to spur economic growth. As a barometer of the country's infrastructure and fixed-asset investment, the latest excavator index, showed accelerated pace of construction activity. During the Jan.-Aug. period, the average monthly operating rate of construction machinery in China was 61.45 percent, with the monthly rate for August alone standing at 63.99 percent, sustaining growth momentum since the second quarter, showed the index, jointly tracked by the state broadcaster CCTV, the leading construction gear maker Sany Heavy Industry Co., Ltd, and the industrial internet service provider ROOTCLOUD. The index, by observing the operating rate and working hours of various types of heavy machinery, offers a full picture of the projects under construction across the country.

Among the equipment surveyed, four types of equipment, including crane trucks, excavators, pump trucks and pavers, all necessary for infrastructure projects, saw their operating rate exceeding 60 percent. In another sign of improvement, the production and prices of construction materials, such as steel and cement, also saw rises. Data from the China Iron and Steel Association showed that the average daily output of crude steel from the country's major steel mills increased 2.23 percent in mid-September from that in early September. Due to growing demand, prices of

cement across the country has steadily increased since the beginning of August, with the price index for cement expanding 2.12 percent at the end of August from a month earlier, data from industry information provider 100njz.com showed. The industry data, which pointed to an acceleration in construction output, was in line with the growth of fixed-asset investment, which went up 5.8 percent year on year in the first eight months of this year.

Meanwhile, investment in infrastructure gained 8.3 percent year on year, official data showed. Behind the upbeat reading is the country's channeling of more support for infrastructure construction amid national efforts to catalyze domestic demand and sustain economic recovery. The State Council executive meeting announced last month that the quota of "policy-backed and development-oriented financial instruments" would be expanded by another 300 billion yuan (about 42.7 billion U.S. dollars) to better fund major infrastructure projects. Prior to this, 300 billion yuan in total had already been allocated via such instruments, namely two funds operated by the China Development Bank and the Agricultural Development Bank of China, respectively. Meanwhile, more capital has been tilted to the sector by expediting the issuance of special-purpose bonds to spur investment.

During the first eight months of the year, such bonds worth a total of 3.52 trillion yuan were issued nationwide, with those issued for project construction basically hitting the annual quota, according to the Ministry of Finance. The country will continue to leverage the role of the special-purpose bonds in boosting effective investment, with a focus on new infrastructure and new energy projects, assistant finance minister Ou Wenhan told a media conference earlier this month. Looking ahead, the total infrastructure investment in 2022 may grow by 10 percent to 12 percent, lifting the nominal GDP growth rate by 1.2 to 1.4 percentage points, as estimated in a recent research report by the China International Capital Corporation. Infrastructure investment will likely give a stronger boost to the economy in September, and its multiplier effect will also increase, the report added.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 09/26/2022

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## **China to Allow Deferrals of Gov't-levied Charges, Tax Concessions for Private Pensions**

China will allow market entities to defer payments of certain government-levied charges to further reduce financial burdens, and offer tax concessions for private pension schemes, according to a State Council executive meeting. At the meeting, chaired by Chinese Premier Li Keqiang on Monday, decisions were also made to enhance government services, ensure a bumper autumn harvest with improved rural infrastructure, and promote the development of the self-employment sector. Payments of certain government-levied charges and deposits will be temporarily deferred to further ease the burdens on market entities and help them overcome

difficulties. "Market entities, especially micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, self-employed households and manufacturing firms now face considerable difficulties," Li said. "Postponing the collection of government-levied charges and deposits is an important step to support market players. All policies must be delivered on the ground without delay."

The meeting rolled out an additional set of fee deferral policies for the fourth quarter of this year. Payments of 14 government-levied charges, including farmland reclamation fees and sewage and household waste disposal fees, amounting to over 53 billion yuan (7.49 billion U.S. dollars) will be deferred without incurring overdue fines. Localities will be encouraged to postpone the collection of sub-national government-levied charges for enterprises, and arbitrary charges will be strictly prohibited. Payments of project quality deposits of various kinds, totaling approximately 63 billion yuan, will be deferred. Due responsibilities must be fulfilled and promises delivered with concrete actions to ensure market entities truly benefit from the policies. "Relevant institutions and charge-levying mechanisms should be refined to foster a world-class and market-oriented business environment governed by a sound legal framework," Li said.

It was decided at the meeting that tax concessions would be offered for private pension schemes that enjoy policy support and are run commercially. The meeting noted that such private pension schemes are useful complements to the basic old-age insurance scheme, and can better meet people's diverse needs and enhance social security safeguards. Personal income tax concessions will be made available for these private pension schemes. Participants will be entitled to a contribution deduction of up to 12,000 yuan each year from their annual taxable income. No tax will be levied on investment yields for the time being. The actual tax burden for receiving pension benefits will be lowered from its previous 7.5 percent to 3 percent. This policy will be applied retroactively to Jan. 1 this year. "The policy supports we are introducing this time will deliver sizable benefits. In the process of implementation, we need to gradually fine-tune the policies and sum up experience before applying them more broadly," Li said.

The meeting also decided on measures to make more government services inter-provincially accessible to unlock market vitality further and bring greater convenience to the people. On top of the 187 government services already inter-provincially accessible, an additional 22 high-demand items that affect a wide range of sectors will be added to the list to address the pressing concerns of households and businesses. Inter-agency information sharing will be enhanced and operational standards aligned to make more inter-provincial services available online and processed on a one-stop basis. The needs of senior citizens for in-person services will also be well met. Personal privacy and trade secrets will be protected pursuant to the law. Moreover, genuine efforts will be made to ensure a bumper autumn harvest. The country's grain output this year is set to hit its target of more

than 650 billion kilograms, according to the meeting.

The construction of existing agricultural and rural infrastructure projects will be accelerated, and a number of new projects will break ground, with investments worth over 300 billion yuan expected to be completed this year. A draft regulation on promoting the development of self-employed individuals was also passed at the meeting. The draft clearly stipulates equal access and fair treatment for self-employed people, the protection of their property rights and business autonomy, and policy support in taxation, fees and finance. China's 160 million market entities, including 110 million self-employed households, play a unique role in propping up employment, improving people's livelihoods, and promoting the unimpeded micro-circulation of the economy.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 09/27/2022

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## **China's Private Economy Expands Rapidly over Past Decade**

China's private economy has posted rapid expansion over the past decade thanks to an improving market environment, the country's top economic planner said on Thursday. The number of private firms more than quadrupled from 10.85 million to 44.57 million over the last 10 years as a nurturing environment for the private economy is continuously improved, the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) told a press conference. As a result of a string of pro-market measures, China's global ranking for its business environment rose to 31st place in the latest ranking from 96th in 2013. By the end of 2021, China had attracted more than 2.6 trillion U.S. dollars of foreign direct investment. A growing community of Chinese firms have ventured overseas. The number of overseas Chinese-funded enterprises has increased from nearly 22,000 at the end of 2012 to more than 45,000 today, according to the NDRC.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 09/29/2022

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## **JAPAN: NEC to Establish New Green Data Centers in Kanagawa and Kobe**

In response to the growing demand for data centers, NEC Corp will establish two new green data centers that utilize 100% renewable energy. The "NEC Kanagawa Data Center: Phase 2 Building" is scheduled to open in the second half of 2023, and the "NEC Kobe Data Center: Phase 3 Building" is slated to begin operations in the first half of 2024. In recent years, the data center market has experienced qualitative changes as demand has increased. Specifically, there is a need to achieve highly efficient electricity and to make use of renewable energy in order to realize a carbon-free society, and to ensure connectivity and security by accelerating the use

of public cloud services in line with the promotion of DX by corporations and governments.

NEC has set a target for FY2030 to reduce greenhouse gas by 55% compared to FY2017, and the target has been validated at the SBT 1.5°C level from the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi). In order to contribute to the achievement of this goal, as well as the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by customers, NEC will establish two new green data centers that utilize 100% renewable energy. In addition, in order to realize better services, NEC will continue to strengthen its data center business from three perspectives: "safety and security," which supports disaster resistance and high security; "efficiency," which includes energy savings; and "connectivity," which enables connections to various cloud services.

From <https://japantoday.com> 09/22/2022

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## **Private Sector Wages in Japan Return to Pre-Pandemic Levels**

A survey by Japan's tax authority shows that the average pay of private-sector workers has returned to a level seen before the coronavirus pandemic. The National Tax Agency said on Wednesday that the average annual wage in 2021 was 4.4 million yen or just over 30,700 dollars. That is 2.4 percent higher in yen terms than the previous year. It is also the first increase in three years and even exceeds the level in 2018, a year before the pandemic. The survey covered nearly 53 million full-and part-time company workers employed throughout the year. The average bonus amount edged up to the equivalent of 4,600 dollars. Workers in 10 of the 14 sectors surveyed received higher bonuses, especially those which had been hit hard by the pandemic. Bonus payouts rose by 14 percent in the hospitality industry and 13 percent in the services sector.

From <https://www3.nhk.or.jp> 09/29/2022

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## **SOUTH KOREA: Telecom's 5G Download Speed Ranks No. 1 Among Global Telecoms Report**

SK Telecom Co., South Korea's largest wireless carrier, ranks No. 1 in terms of download speed of 5G networks, an industry report showed Friday. According to global mobile industry tracker Opensignal, the average download speed using SK Telecom's 5G network was recorded at 469.6 megabits per second (Mbps), 2.55 times faster than the 184.2 Mbps average among global mobile carriers. LG Uplus Corp., the country's third-largest mobile carrier, ranked second, with 429.6 Mbps, followed by Bulgaria's Vivacom Inc., Tele2 AB of Sweden and KT Corp. of South Korea. In terms of 5G upload speed, SK Telecom was ranked seventh, and LG Uplus came in at 16th place. SK Telecom, KT and LG Uplus took the top three spots in terms of 5G gaming experience, the report showed.

## South-East Asia

### **INDONESIA: Startups Chase Profit to Survive amid Investment Crisis**

Startup companies in Indonesia now have to change their business strategies to more efficient and profit-oriented ways to survive the "bubble burst." Chairman of the Indonesian Venture Capital and Startup Association Eddi Danusaputro said that investors are currently more selective in disbursing their money amid the global economic crisis that has triggered a lack of liquidity and rising interest rates. "Investors are now only interested in startups that can manage their runaway and have a clear path to profitability, especially the future valuation trend will fluctuate," Danusaputro told Xinhua recently. Indonesia has 40 percent of Southeast Asia's Gross Merchandise Value of 70 billion U.S. dollars in 2021, which is expected to rise to 146 billion dollars in 2025, according to the e-Conomy SEA 2021 report "Roaring 20s: the SEA Digital Decade" researched by Google, Temasek, and Bain & Company. This archipelagic nation of 270 million people with a growing middle class has many fields to explore, from financial inclusion, transportation to agriculture, which are very tempting for venture capital firms.

But so far, nearly 3,000 technology startups in the country are competing to get the unicorn title with valuation as the main goal and putting aside profit, said Danusaputro. When the "bubble burst" of funding sources comes, efficiency is the only option for those who are not yet profitable to survive, said Danusaputro. These startup companies have to reduce promotions, delay expansion, tighten cash flow, and even cut the number of employees. "This step to reduce the number of employees does not seem good in the short term but it makes the company survive and be profitable in the long term," he said while emphasizing the importance of financial independence rather than having to rely on donor money for healthy startups. If startup companies are healthy, they can maximize their potential and build a strong digital ecosystem in a country to prevent a financial crisis, added Danusaputro. Venture capital firm AC Ventures said two years ago was a golden period for startups amid the pandemic that triggered people to switch their activities to online, but now market expectations have changed a lot due to the economic crisis.

Stopping "burning money" and pursuing profit are key strategies, said AC Ventures' Founding Partner Pandu Sjahrir. "Mergers or acquisitions are examples of exciting new opportunities," Sjahrir said. To survive and continue to grow, SIRCLO, a startup company providing services and software for e-commerce, is focusing on cost-conscious business strategies and developing services that drive revenue

systems, said founder and CEO of SIRCLO Group Brian Marshal. "The business model we are currently running is oriented towards sustainability and profitability, so even (if) investment is being tightened, we are optimistic that we will be able to grow amidst this challenging situation," said Marshal. Moreover, e-commerce solution services will be needed more in the future, Marshal added, amid technological developments that boost online sales trends. Rather than relying on external funds, startup NoLimit Indonesia, which focuses on monitoring and analyzing online media with big data technology, prefers to maximize its resources as internal capital to build a healthy company. "I think all startups can start running their company with whatever capital they have, as long as they are consistent and tough to face challenges," said CEO of NoLimit Indonesia Aqsath Rasyid.

*From <https://english.news.cn/09/02/2022>*

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## **Indonesia Invites Foreign Investment to Help Develop Railway Industry**

Indonesia's transportation ministry said Friday that it is seeking foreign investment to develop its railway industry, as the country has planned to have 7,451 km of train tracks by 2024. As of 2020, the largest economy in Southeast Asia had a total of 6,320 km of railway, according to data from the ministry. The target to extend the train track to 7,451 km has been included in the country's 2020-2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan. "We are pleased to invite any potential investors to participate in this development project," Djarot Tri Wardhono, a senior official of the ministry, told reporters on Friday. To attract more foreign investors, the Indonesian government is currently drafting a regulation to create a friendly investment climate in Indonesia, according to the official.

*From <https://english.news.cn/09/09/2022>*

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## **CAMBODIA: Approving 123 Investment Projects in First 8 Months**

Cambodia approved 123 fixed-asset investment projects worth nearly 3.3 billion U.S. dollars in the first eight months of 2022, according to the Council for the Development of Cambodia's report on Tuesday. The approved projects during the January-August period included garment, footwear and travel goods factories, tire factory, hotels, hospitals, automobile assembly factory, electronic factory, and fruit processing and packaging factory, among others, the report said. Lim Heng, vice-president of the Cambodia Chamber of Commerce, said the kingdom's successful control of the COVID-19 pandemic, the implementation of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) trade pact and the Cambodia-China Free Trade Agreement (CCFTA) are the key factors attracting investors. Both RCEP and CCFTA entered into force in January 2022. "Cambodia has continued to attract a large amount of investment capital even during the pandemic. This truly reflects that



the kingdom is a potential destination for both domestic and foreign investors, especially for the Chinese ones," he told Xinhua.

*From <https://english.news.cn/09/06/2022>*

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## **THAILAND: Expects to Earn 64 Bln USD Tourism Revenue in 2023**

Thailand's government expects to achieve up to 2.38 trillion baht (about 64.3 billion U.S. dollars) in tourism revenue in 2023, a government spokesperson said Monday. As the tourism sector, a key driver of the Southeast Asian country's economic growth, has continued to recover, the Thai government has set a target of bringing the revenue back to 80 percent of its 2019 level in 2023, acting government spokesperson Anucha Burapachaisri said. In the best-case scenario, the Thai government expects to see a tourism revenue of 1.5 trillion baht (about 40.5 billion U.S. dollars) from foreign tourists while 880 billion baht (about 23.8 billion U.S. dollars) from domestic travels in 2023, Anucha said. The country expects to welcome 1.5 million tourists per month during the last quarter of this year, Anucha said, adding that the number has reached over 1 million so far this month. The country aims to receive 10 million tourists this year.

*From <https://english.news.cn/09/19/2022>*

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## **VIETNAM: Honouring Top 10 ICT Companies 2022**

The total revenue from those featured on the Việt Nam Top 10 ICT companies 2022 reached VNĐ162 trillion, equivalent to US\$7 billion, accounting for 51 per cent of the revenue of the entire Vietnamese software and information technology service industry. The Việt Nam Software and IT Services Association (VINASA) held a ceremony to announce and honour the Việt Nam Top 10 ICT companies 2022 in Hà Nội last week. Launched on April 28, the programme received 147 nominations in 20 fields from 92 businesses after two months. The evaluation council chaired by Dr Mai Liêm Trực, former permanent deputy Minister of Posts and Telecommunications, selected 101 nominees in 18 fields on July 23 to be honoured at the Việt Nam Top 10 ICT companies 2022, including FPT, CTIN, Mobifone, VNPT Technology, Viettel, FUJINET SYSTEMS JSC, NashTech, DMSpro JSC, DIGI-TEXX Co, Ltd and BRAVO Software JSC. Nguyễn Văn Khoa, Chairman of VINASA, said that this year's Top 10 ICT companies list reflected the industry's trends, characteristics and strengths. As well as honouring those on the list, this year's programme also tells stories of efforts, creativity and the ability of digital businesses to transform and inspire, not only in the information technology industry but also in other businesses in the economy, added Khoa. Their activities will aim to help the Government solve big problems, guide and lead the development of the industry and support to lead digital technology enterprises to develop together, invest in, and promote technology start-ups in all industries and fields. Fifteen digital technology enterprises have been selected and

honoured in this category.

### **Digital entrepreneurs take the national mission**

At the event, Deputy Minister of Information and Communications Nguyễn Huy Dũng said that the 13th Party Congress set the goal of developing a prosperous and happy Việt Nam. He emphasised that aspiration certainly had the mission of Vietnamese entrepreneurs and digital enterprises. Talking about the market story, the Deputy Minister said that in the fourth industrial revolution, with the breakthrough development of digital technology, the spirit of the times was innovation, and digital transformation once again named Vietnamese digital technology businesses and entrepreneurs. Dũng said: "Việt Nam also has 14,000 medical facilities, 44,000 schools, nearly one million businesses, five million individual business households, nine million farming households and 26 million households. All are facing the transition to the digital environment. Therefore, the arising new needs are infinite."

Affirming that digital transformation belongs to the entire people, the Deputy Minister analysed that the difference between digital technology lied in connecting people and things to be creative and solve problems together. This work would only bring breakthrough value with the participation of the whole people. Therefore, institution and technology were considered the two engines of the digital transformation machine, noted Dũng. "The Ministry of Information and Communications hopes that the spirit of digital entrepreneurship will spread among the entire population and be the driving force to promote digital transformation," said the Deputy Minister. Emphasising that digital platforms are key to comprehensively solving the problem of digital transformation, the Deputy Minister called on businesses to jointly develop digital platforms. The difference for the population to participate quickly was that digital technology must be simple, like electricity and water. Digital technology must be provided as a service, and everyone could use the latest technology at a lower cost. The digital platform was the key to solving this problem, Dũng said. "When digital platforms that provide technology as a service are widely used, digital technology will become an input for production and business of society. That is also the time when digital technology permeates all aspects of social life," said the Deputy Minister. The Ministry of Information and Communications representative also emphasised the national mission of technology enterprises. "An enterprise is born with a mission, and profit is just a tool to carry out that mission," he said. "Once profitable and has become a large digital technology enterprise, digital entrepreneurs should take on a national mission, align the business's mission with the national mission, to continue to rise higher, to go further and last forever."

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 09/12/2022*

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### **VCCI Comments on Draft Resolution on Firms' Recovery**

As the Ministry of Planning and Investment is gathering comments on a draft

resolution on favourable policy to boost firms' recovery, the Việt Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) asks for clarification on several notions. VCCI opines that the target of 1.5 million firms by 2025 set in the draft is unclear since firms could be either registered or active and their status would make a big difference to its implication. VCCI suggests changing the target to 1.5 million active firms to be more indicative of the economy and business environment. The draft has set another target that said firms would make up 65-70 per cent of GDP, 30-35 per cent of jobs and 98-99 per cent of exports. VCCI holds that the target fails to specify the economic contributions of different types of firms - private firms and FDI firms. The specification is essential as it defines which role each type will play in the economy. VCCI suggests a more specific target be added to the draft, which says private firms would account for 15 per cent of GDP by 2025 and 20 per cent by 2030. Additionally, at least 10 domestic groups operating in the industrial sector and 10 in the service sector would reach a significant scale in the same years. The same goes for the next target, which said around 35-40 per cent of firms would embrace technological innovations and 100 per cent would be well-informed about digital transformation. VCCI says the target's achievability is difficult to assess.

"About 30,000 business facilities receive support in digital transformation" is another target that needs revision. VCCI says the figure is disproportionate to the target of 1.5 million active firms by 2025. VCCI calls for a higher number of business facilities to be supported and further clarification on the extent to which the facilities embrace digital transformation. VCCI suggests 10 per cent of business facilities upgrade into firms and 20 per cent of manufacturing firms operate circularly by 2025. VCCI also suggests the portion of domestic components used in production increase by 10 per cent and qualified workers reach 35 per cent of the labour force. VCCI also suggests firms' sales increase by at least 10 per cent each year and the number of firms granted technological certifications grow at the same pace. Lastly, VCCI suggests exports subject to favourable tariffs under free trade agreements rise to 40-45 per cent by 2025, from the current figure of 32.7 per cent.

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 09/13/2022*

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## **Trà Vinh Province Sees 30 Per Cent Rise in Retail Trade and Services**

The value of retail trade and services in the Cửu Long (Mekong) Delta province of Trà Vinh topped VNĐ30.6 trillion (US\$ 1.34 billion) in the first eight months, a nearly 30 per cent increase year-on-year, according to its Department of Industry and Trade. Phạm Văn Tám, director of the department, said the development of community-based tourism products in Trà Vinh has attracted tourists and improved local people's incomes. Hô and Chim, riverine islands in Càng Long and Châu Thành districts have, for instance, attracted a large number of tourists. With the assistance of local authorities and the HCM City Institute for Tourism and Economic

Development Research, Hô is offering tourism activities such as night tours without using electricity. Visitors can try their hand working as a farmer during the day and have dinner with local people under the light of oil lamps at night and sightsee by walking on mud paths with lanterns. The 22ha island is surrounded by the Cỏ Chiên River and has a total area of 24 households with 49 people. It is considered to have enormous untapped tourism potential with its vast fruit orchards and friendly people. On Chim, many households have started to offer tourism services after getting support from authorities.

Tourists visiting the island can try their hand at playing traditional games and cooking local foods, ride around on bicycles, walk in fruit orchards, row boats, and catch crab, shrimp and fish. Dương Hoàng Sum, director of the province Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism, said advocacy to enhance local people's awareness of community-based tourism is an important factor in developing community-based tourism. Besides the stunning sights of mangrove forests and islets in the Tiền and Hậu Rivers, Trà Vinh also boasts attractions like Ba Động Sea, Bà Om Pond, a number of national intangible cultural heritages, ancient houses, lush orchards and gardens, and 142 Khmer pagodas built in classical style. Realizing that the province has not tapped its tourism potential, local authorities have outlined an ambitious plan to develop tourism into a spearhead economic sector. It hopes to attract 2.5 million visitors a year by 2025, including 85,000 foreigners. According to Sum, many preferential policies have been adopted to attract investment in tourism technical and promotion campaigns have been stepped up both within the country and outside. A top priority is to build the Bà Om Pond tourism complex into a national tourism site, he said. The province is calling for investments in mangrove eco-tourism areas, the Duyên Hải hot mineral spring and Ba Động beach eco-tourism site. Cầu Kè and Trà Cú districts and Duyên Hải Town will be built into hubs for orchard, beach and festival and spiritual tourism. Situated 130km from HCM City and 80km Cần Thơ City, Trà Vinh has a coastline of 65km and is located downstream of the Mekong River and between the Tiền and Hậu rivers, two of its tributaries. It has diverse natural tourism resources and cultures like riverine islands with friendly people, fruit orchards offering year-round harvests and a large number of ethnic Hoa and Khmer peoples. It is home to around 330,000 Khmers, or 31 per cent of its population, and 143 Khmer pagodas.

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 09/14/2022*

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## **New Regulations Enhance Transparency in Private Placement of Bonds**

The new decree on offering and trading private placement bonds helps standardise and improve bond issuance conditions, supervision of capital use purposes and information transparency, said analysts. The Government on September 16 issued Decree 65/2022/NĐ-CP which amends and supplements a number of articles of

Decree 153/2020/NĐ-CP dated December 31, 2020 on offering and trading private placement bonds in the domestic market and offering corporate bonds to the international market. The new decree seeks to strengthen issuers' responsibilities and obligations in using bond proceeds for the intended purposes. Analysts from Mirae Asset Securities Vietnam Joint Stock Company, Nguyễn Nam Sơn and Nguyễn Dương Công Nguyên, said that the corporate bond market will see many fluctuations in the short term, related to the review of the compliance level of bond issuance. The development potential of this market remained very large. If compared with countries in the region, the ratio of corporate bonds to GDP of Việt Nam is currently at a low level of 15 per cent, while that of Thailand is about 97 per cent or Malaysia with 58 per cent.

The issuance of this new decree shows the determination of the management agency to stabilise the corporate bond market, which has faced many risks and shortcomings, leading to cases of violations in recent years, they said. The new decree adds provisions on ensuring publicity and sets standards and strengthens sanctions enforcement measures and removes unreasonable constraints on the corporate bond market, according to Vũ Tiến Lộc, president of the Vietnam International Arbitration Centre and member of the Economic Committee of the National Assembly. All the adjustments in the new decree are believed to strengthen the State's management role to protect investors, Lộc said. According to the Việt Nam Bond Market Association (VBMA), in the first eight months of 2022, there were 344 private placements of bonds worth about VNĐ211.3 trillion, accounting for 96 per cent of the total issuance value. The value of bond private placement decreased by about 40 per cent compared to the same period last year.

KB Securities Việt Nam Joint Stock Company (KBSV) said that since 2005, when the Vietnamese corporate bond market started operating, the total issuance value has reached nearly VNĐ2.5 quadrillion with more than 5,000 issuances, playing an important role in providing capital for the economy. The market size has increased sharply by 140 times, equivalent to nearly 18.3 per cent of GDP. Most businesses choose to issue in the form of private placement, with the private issuance rate usually reaching 85-95 per cent of the total issuance, because of public issuance regulations at a higher cost. Đỗ Bảo Ngọc, deputy general director of Việt Nam Kiến Thiết Securities Company, said that the new decree would help the market solve the current shortcomings in legal issues. Under the new decree, the bond owner's representative also participates in the process of controlling the purpose of capital use of the issuer and must periodically report to the management agency. Thus, there will be an additional unit to monitor the process of using capital. According to Ngọc, Decree 65 has a positive and huge impact on the corporate bond market, contributing to solving capital problems and promoting positive changes in businesses in terms of transparency, while limiting investor risks.

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 09/23/2022*

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## HN to Support SMEs' Digitalisation

Hà Nội has started a programme to raise awareness of the benefits of digitalisation among the capital city's small-to-medium-sized (SMEs) businesses. The city's objective is to provide some 90,000 newly created SMEs with guidance to access their own digitalisation efforts, as well as technical and financial support by the year 2025. The city considers SMEs' digitalisation a cornerstone for future development and a gateway to access the international market. Meanwhile, the city aims to complete the transition to digital signatures and digital receipts by 2025. Another objective is to create a thriving ecosystem that facilitates and nurtures the digitalisation process. According to the city's People Committee, Hà Nội is to provide up to 50 per cent (no more than VND50 million or US\$2,150) of small businesses' costs to acquire digital services to improve business management, operations and solutions. Medium-sized businesses are entitled to up to 50 per cent of the same costs but with a higher cap at VND100 million. In addition, the city is to provide up to 50 per cent (no more than VND50 million for small businesses and VND100 million for medium-sized businesses) of purchases made to speed up the digitalisation process. Meanwhile, SMEs that aim for the global market are entitled to a special support package, designed specifically to assist them in brand building, exporting and completing their digitalisation process. The city's planning and investment department has been tasked with overseeing the implementation of the programme.

*From <https://vietnamnews.vn> 09/27/2022*

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## South Asia

### **INDIA: Tech Mahindra Teams Up with Microsoft to Offer Next Generation Integrated Security Solutions**

Tech Mahindra, a leading provider of digital transformation, consulting, and business re-engineering services and solutions, today announced that it has collaborated with Microsoft to provide next-generation integrated security solutions for customers. As part of the collaboration, Tech Mahindra and Microsoft will build SenTindra, a cloud-based virtual security operations center developed on Microsoft Sentinel. SenTindra offers a single monitoring pane with all security components integrated to assist in immediate addressing of security threats and thereby giving customers an improved security posture. With Tech Mahindra's secure assessment and migration approach backed by Azure's security features, SenTindra will cover the entire lifecycle of the migration and transformation requirements for a seamless and secure experience for customers. This collaboration will enhance security, simplify access, and set smart policies across customers' different cloud environments. Kunal Purohit, Chief Digital Services Officer, Tech Mahindra, said, "Cyberattacks today are more advanced than ever before, hence there is a need for a holistic next generation

security solution that brings data aggregation, analytics, visibility, orchestration, AI (Artificial Intelligence), ML (Machine Learning) capabilities bundled together. Through this collaboration we will provide the 'SenTindra' platform that will enable enterprises to experience focused industry use cases and custom solutions on Sentinel's next generation cloud native and scalable SIEM (security information and event management) solution." By using Microsoft Sentinel's AI-enabled data aggregation and analyzing capability, and Tech Mahindra's MSSP (Managed Security Service Provider) capabilities, this collaboration will help in improving customers' security posture by providing ready to use templates that help collect, detect, investigate and respond to security threats. Additionally, it reduces delivery risks and assessment phase timelines for customers.

Vasu Jakkal, CVP, Microsoft, Security, Compliance, Identity and Privacy, said, "With the launch of the 'Sentinel Showcase Labs - Sentindra', global customers will have a platform to experience various custom-built and very relevant scenarios focused on the need of specific industries and business environments and demonstrate the holistic end-to-end features of our scalable SIEM (security information and event management) & SOAR (Security Orchestration, Automation, and Response) solution." Tech Mahindra provides a comprehensive suite of services spanning the entire lifecycle of the security journey for our customers. The collaboration is in line with Tech Mahindra's NXT.NOWTM framework, which aims to enhance 'Human Centric Experience' by focusing on increased investment in emerging technologies and solutions that enable digital transformation and meet the evolving needs of the customer.

From <https://news.siliconindia.com> 09/06/2022

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## **DailyHunt, Josh Parent VerSe Set to Permit Indian Creators for Web 3.0**

Leading local language technology platform VerSe Innovation, the owner of DailyHunt and Josh, is all set to enter the world of Web 3.0 and enable local, vernacular content creators monetise in the realm of metaverse, non-fungible tokens (NFTs), Blockchain and more. Umang Bedi, Co-founder, VerSe Innovation, told IANS on Monday that in the next couple of weeks, the company, which now has a valuation of \$5 billion after raising \$805 million last week, will make a very detailed announcement in the Web 3.0 space. "With the Web 3.0 platform, we will further enable the creator ecosystem -- large, medium and small creators -- in India as another way to help them monetise. We are focused on helping creators make more money and help them grow across multiple genres," Bedi told IANS. The time, he stressed, has come for Indian companies to really be able to showcase and build globally relevant businesses. "I think there's a huge opportunity now to compete and create a new market in Web 3.0. This is the endeavour we are seeking and yearning but, of course, we don't have the proof points yet," Bedi noted. Hopefully a year down

the line, once the platforms are launched, "we'll be able to say where we are on the journey", he added. Giving a much-needed boost to the Indian startup growth story, VerSe Innovation last week announced it has raised \$805 million from global investors, taking its valuation to \$5 billion. VerSe Innovation, which owns popular short-video platform Josh and local language content platform Dailyhunt, has raised \$1.5 billion in the past year. The investment will be focused on strengthening its leadership position as the largest, fastest growing local language AI driven content platform in the country.

According to Bedi, they were the first ones to crack the code in the Indian vernacular language content market. "Asia, Latin America, developed Europe -- these are all local language markets with local language characteristics. What we have built are successful local language based data science and machine learning models. We believe that there are definite synergies to export the local learnings and serve a large market," Bedi said. VerSe plans on both deepening and broadening its AI/ML and data science capabilities to further cement its leadership position across all user, engagement and retention metrics, drive deeper monetisation including influencers, e-commerce and live streaming and forays into Web 3.0 experiences. It currently has a local language creator base of over 50 million creators as well as its local language content ecosystem which experiences over 80 billion video plays per month. With Web 3.0 platform, "you will have the ability to monetise your content and experiences in an efficient way", Bedi added. "I think over time, you would extend those experiences to brands as well to connect with their audiences. And over time, brands will enter into a truly virtual metaverse experience," he added. VerSe is perhaps the only company in the Indian vernacular language space that has cracked the code of user growth, engagement and monetisation at scale. Josh currently has over 150 million MAUs (monthly active users) while Dailyhunt serves over 350 million users every month, offering content in 15 languages from a licensed creator ecosystem of over 100,000 content partners and individual content creators. Another app ePublicVibe' from the company serves over 5 million monthly active users (MAUs) and 1 million daily active users (DAUs) and has over 6 million downloads on the Play Store.

From <https://news.siliconindia.com> 09/11/2022

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## **UP: CM Yogi Launches 700 Anganwadi Centres, Stresses Use of Technology for Proper Functioning and Progress**

Stating that proper upbringing during childhood is essential for empowered youth and future nation-builders, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday emphasised that every child receives quality education and nutrition during their growing years. Addressing the programme held at the state capital to mark National Nutrition Month, CM Yogi said, "Health and education are fundamental to the development and growth of any country, hence it is extremely important that every



child during growing years receives quality education and proper nutrition as proper care during childhood leads to empowered youth and capable future nation-builders.” The CM on the occasion launched as many as 700 Anganwadi Centres, out of which the foundation stone for about 199 centres were laid, while about 501 centres were inaugurated. In addition, ‘Sahyog’ & ‘Bal Pitara’ mobile applications were launched. The CM also launched a poshan manual titled ‘Saksham’ for anganwadi workers and ‘Sashakt Anganwadi’ booklet as well as commenced programme ‘Dular’ for children up to six years of age in the state. Maintaining that the state government has worked dedicatedly to ensure all-round development of children, adolescents and youth, CM said, “After taking charge as the chief minister in 2017, it was a challenge to improve UP’s condition in terms of Women and Child Health. As a result of various initiatives undertaken, UP has shown significant progress and has improved its ranking in the National Family Health Survey.”

He went on to say that in terms of Anemia, UP has fared better than the national average and today, is progressing in ensuring healthy childhood of infants resulting in decreased infant mortality rate and maternal mortality rate. “Before 2017, many Anganwadi centres did not have their own premises, identifying these, over 21,700 Anganwadi centres now have their own buildings,” he said. CM Yogi also stressed the need for increasing use of technology for better functioning of Anganwadi centres, saying, “Anganwadi workers played a decisive role in the fight against Covid-19 and their contribution is unparalleled. We must collectively contribute to strengthening Anganwadi centres which are home to about 1.70 crore children for their proper upbringing. Technology must be utilised efficiently for more progress.” He also expressed gratitude to PM Narendra Modi for making the programme of National Nutrition Month a national-level programme and to Governor Anandiben Patel for successfully carrying forward the process of adoption of Anganwadi centres. He said that, had the Covid-19 pandemic not affected the pace of the working of the government, the process of converting all the Angwanwadi centres into pre-primary schools would have progressed rapidly, however, dedicated efforts are being made in this direction. Minister for Women and Child Development Baby Rani Maurya, Women Welfare (Minister of State) Pratibha Shukla, Durga Shankar Misra and Anamika Singh, among other dignitaries, were present on the occasion.

From <https://egov.eletsonline.com> 09/17/2022

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## **Haryana Bags Special Award for Promoting, Enforcing Energy Conservation in Building Sector**

Adding yet another feather to its achievement hat, the state of Haryana has been awarded ‘Special Award’ for State Designated Agency (SDA) – Category-II by the jury for the National Energy Efficiency Roadmap for Movement towards Affordable and Natural habitat (NEERMAN) Awards-2022. An official spokesperson said that the Department of New and Renewable Energy, Haryana and HAREDA bagged the

award for its exemplary performance to promote and enforce energy conservation in the building sector in the state. Dr. Hanif Qureshi, Director General, New and Renewable Energy Department and HAREDA received the award from the Ministry. Haryana has designated the Department of New and Renewable Energy and HAREDA as State Designated Agency for the promotion and enforcement of energy conservation activities in the State. The state was awarded during a three-day international conference 'Augmenting Nature by Green Affordable New-habitat (ANGAN) 2022 – Making zero-carbon transition in buildings', organised by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), Ministry of Power at New Delhi. As per the directions of Chief Minister Manohar Lal, more than 95 per cent of government buildings/offices have replaced their conventional lights with LED Lights. For this exemplary performance, Haryana has bagged the award. The state government has also mandated the implementation of Energy Conservation Building codes for all new buildings having connected loads above 100 KW.

From <https://egov.eletsonline.com> 09/19/2022

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## **FICCI Says Employment Outlook Looks Improving for Manufacturing Sector**

The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) has said there is an improvement in the hiring outlook for the manufacturing sector. It stated that after a lull period due to the Covid induced lockdown, the first quarter of 2021-22 witnessed a revival, which the body said, has continued in the subsequent quarters of Q4 (Jan-Mar 2021-22) and Q1 April-June (2022-23) as well. The revival has been marked in the overall employment outlook for the sector. The findings have come out from its latest survey on the manufacturing sector. More findings from the survey revealed that 54.8% of the total respondents marked higher production levels in the Q1. There is a 10% increase in the average expectation in production; which the survey said was little less in the Q1 of last year. The important part of the FICCI survey revealed an overall improvement in employment creation by the sector during this quarter in comparison to the last year's, same time figure. Last year, the same quarter had 25% respondents (organisations) saying they were looking for hiring more resources in the next few months. Whereas, this year, the same quarter result showed 53% of the respondents in Q1, are now looking at employing additional staff in the next three months. FICCI's survey covered major sectors including automotive, capital goods, cement, chemicals, fertilisers and pharmaceuticals, footwear, machine tools, metal and metal products, paper products, textiles, toys, tyre and miscellaneous. These sectors have been assessed for the period of Q1 2022.

Responses have been included from more than 300 manufacturing units with a combined annual turnover of over INR 3 Lakh Cr from both large and SME segments. Further, the available average capacity utilisation for Q4 in manufacturing is 77%, a little higher than 75% in the previous quarter. This reflects increased economic

activity in the sector. Moreover, 40% respondents have said they plan for capacity addition in their different plants in the next six months. If we analyse the sector, there are factors contributing to the global economic uncertainty. Primarily attributed to the Russia-Ukraine War and surge in Covid cases worldwide. These led to high raw material prices, increased cost of finance, cumbersome regulations and clearances, shortage of working capital, high logistics cost among others impacting expansion plans of the manufacturing sector in general and these survey respondents in particular. Going further, the survey did reveal that there is an improvement in the exports outlook for the country as well. The survey has pointed out that 53.4% of the total respondents shared they expect an average increase of 15.2% in exports for the period of Q1 2022-23 as compared to the first quarter of last year. Moreover, there is an increase in the average interest rate paid by the manufacturers as well. It has been marked at 9.69% per annum as against 8.4% per annum during the last quarter; the highest rate at which loan has been raised is 16% per annum. Overall, the survey hinted a moderate to strong growth in Q1 2022-23 excluding a few segments.

From <https://egov.eletsonline.com> 09/21/2022

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## **NEPAL: ADB Vice-President Addresses Infrastructure Summit, Reaffirms Support for Private Sector Development**

Asian Development Bank (ADB) Vice-President for Private Sector Operations and Public–Private Partnerships Ashok Lavasa was a keynote speaker at the Nepal Infrastructure Summit 2022 and reaffirmed ADB’s commitment to support Nepal’s development agenda through private sector development. “ADB is ready to support the Government of Nepal in attracting private sector investment by developing an enabling environment, mobilizing high-impact capital, introducing new technologies and innovations, and by building internal capacity,” Mr. Lavasa said in remarks at the summit, which was attended by former Prime Minister of Nepal Pushpa Kamal Dahal and representatives of development partners.

During his 5-day visit, Mr. Lavasa met Nepal Finance Minister and ADB Governor Janardan Sharma “Prabhakar” and commended the government on progress toward legal and regulatory reforms to attract private and foreign investment. He said ADB seeks to expand its support for Nepal in areas including public–private partnerships, infrastructure development, small and medium-sized enterprises, climate-smart agriculture, and digitalization, to spur environmentally sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Mr. Lavasa also met Nepal Rastra Bank Governor Maha Prasad Adhikari, Managing Director of Nepal Electricity Authority Kulman Ghising, and Investment Board Nepal Chief Executive Officer Sushil Bhatta.

The vice-president also met with Federation of Contractors Association of Nepal President Rabi Singh, Federation of Women Entrepreneurs' Association of Nepal President Neeru Rayamajhi Khatri, Nepal Chamber of Commerce Senior

Vice-President Kamlesh Kumar Agrawal, Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industries Vice-President Anjan Shrestha, Confederation of Nepalese Industries Vice-President Birendra Raj Pandey, Independent Power Producers' Association Vice-President Nepal Ganesh Karki, and other representatives from the private sector to discuss areas for collaboration and ADB support for the private sector. ADB Country Director for Nepal Arnaud Cauchois joined Mr. Lavasa in these meetings. ADB's cumulative assistance to Nepal since 1969 was \$7.3 billion as of 31 December 2021.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 09/11/2022

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## Central-West Asia

### **AZERBAIJAN: Working to Create System of Benefits, Privileges for Local IT Companies**

Work is underway in Azerbaijan to create a system of benefits and privileges for local IT companies, Adviser to the Head of the Innovation and Digital Development Agency under the Ministry of Digital Development and Transport Aghahuseyn Ahmadov told Trend. According to Ahmadov, Azerbaijani startups register their companies in foreign jurisdictions due to several factors. "First of all, this comes from the totality of benefits and privileges provided by a particular country. Companies registered in the US state of Delaware, or in the Cayman Islands and Singapore are more likely to attract US and European investments," he said. "If we consider the case of registering a company in Azerbaijan, then, having passed the first stage, the organization will be aimed at entering international markets. Accordingly, in order to enter the US market and attract US investments, it's necessary to register the company in jurisdictions familiar to these investors," the agency's representative explained. "Given all the above, the Innovation Agency, together with other government agencies, is working to create benefits and privileges and create a favorable environment for foreign investors in Azerbaijan." "At the same time, the exit of a startup project outside the country where it was created may be due to the fact that the project cannot develop further, since the startup creators have already completely covered this market. We are also working in this direction by analyzing the market and tools for creating demand for technologies, in aerospace, oil and gas, financial and other areas," the agency's representative said. Ahmadov added that it's planned to create the elements and conditions which will lead to an increase in the number of registered IT companies and foreign direct investments in Azerbaijan.

From <https://en.trend.az> 09/11/2022

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### **Azerbaijan Reveals Easy-Term Loan Amount Given Out to Entrepreneurs**

The Azerbaijan Entrepreneurship Development Fund under the Ministry of Economy has issued 72.1 million manat (\$42.4 million) of east-term loans to entrepreneurs since the beginning of 2022, Trend reports citing the country's Economy Minister Mikayil Jabbarov's Twitter post. According to him, the funds will be allocated for the implementation of 1,732 projects. "These funds are expected to contribute to the creation of 1,690 new jobs. A total of 71.4 percent of the preferential loans fall on the agricultural sector, whilst 28.6 percent – on manufacturing and processing of various industrial products and other areas. Thereat, 88.2 percent of the funds fall on the country's regions, whereas 11.8 percent – on Baku," the minister tweeted.

From <https://en.trend.az> 09/21/2022

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## **Azerbaijan Sees Growth in Added Value in Industrial Sectors – Minister**

The added value in the construction sector in Azerbaijan from January through August 2022 increased by 14 percent year-on-year, Minister of Economy of Azerbaijan Mikayil Jabbarov said on Twitter, Trend reports. According to the minister, over the first 8 months of the current year, the added value in processing grew by 4.2 percent, and in the non-oil processing - by 12.7 percent year-on-year.

From <https://en.trend.az> 09/23/2022

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## **Azerbaijan Issues Startup Certificates to Several More SMEs**

Azerbaijani Small and Medium Business Development Agency (SMBDA) under the Ministry of Economy issued start-up certificates to several more SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises), Trend reports via the agency. The certificates were issued for: - projects of the online shopping platform of Smartap LLC; - organization of a taxi service through the mobile application of BID TAXI LLC; - MeContest social network platform, - GarderApp clothing and accessories marketplace of Selenium Co. LLC. - ShiftCon metaverse platform, - Avto Info LLC information system for checking the history of used cars in Azerbaijan (service, insurance, etc.) - MetaStudio metaverse operation and sale of 3D printers for the construction, development and sale of virtual games; - BOOST LLC online platform for provision of 'influencer marketing' services; - Indi Market LLC mobile application for provision of delivery services; According to the SMBDA, the number of SMEs in Azerbaijan which received startup certificates has reached 68. A startup certificate exempts SMEs from paying income tax and tax on income from innovation activities for a period of three years from the date of its receipt. The micro and small-sized enterprises, projects of which are under development, should apply to the agency for obtaining the startup certificates.

From <https://en.trend.az> 09/30/2022

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## **UZBEKISTAN: Revealing Production Indicators of Metalworking Enterprises**

Data on the manufacturing of products by enterprises of the metalworking industry of Uzbekistan from January through July 2022 has been published, Trend reports citing the Uzbek State Statistics Committee. During the reporting period, the country's metalworking enterprises manufactured products worth 7.48 trillion soums (\$683.3 million). Navoi region accounted for the largest share in the metal ore mining industry from January through July this year - 6.29 trillion soums, or \$574.5 million (84.1 percent). Meanwhile, Uzbekistan is rich in mineral resources and precious metals, including gold, molybdenum, silver, tungsten and zinc.

From <https://en.trend.az> 09/12/2022

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## **Oceania**

### **AUSTRALIA: \$645 Million Assistance Package for Taxi Industry**

Taxi licence holders across the State will receive an additional \$500 million in assistance payments as part of a comprehensive \$645 million package to fully deregulate the industry and benefit customers long term. Treasurer Matt Kean said \$145 million had already been paid out and additional payments would be made early next year, once legislation to remove taxi licence supply restrictions is passed in Parliament. "This will create a level playing field across the sector, freeing the taxi industry to better compete, while driving improved and more innovative services for customers," Mr Kean. "To help existing taxi licence holders adapt to these changes, the package will provide \$100,000 for each eligible Sydney metro taxi licence up to six licences per owner. It will provide up to \$130,000 for each taxi licence outside of Sydney with no cap on the number of licences per owner."

Minister for Transport, Veterans and Western Sydney David Elliott said he was proud to deliver a win for the taxi industry. "I told the taxi industry that the NSW Government has their back and today is proof of that," Mr Elliott said. "Members of the taxi industry have suffered greatly over the past several years, financially and emotionally. I am pleased to see today that we have acted to support them by offering financial assistance which surpasses the package proposed to the industry in September last year." Minister for Regional Transport and Roads Sam Faraway said the taxi industry is vitally important in regional areas, where ride share services simply aren't available like they are in the city. "This financial assistance package will help the regional taxi industry move forward and build on its vital role in providing transport services across regional NSW," Mr Faraway said.

“All eligible taxi licence holders should ensure their contact details are up to date with the Point to Point Transport Commissioner.” The NSW Government has consulted closely with peak industry bodies like the NSW Taxi Council and A2B Services to develop the package. Under the package, the \$1 Passenger Service Levy (PSL) will be extended from 2026-27 to 2028-29. The amount of the PSL will not be changed. This package will form part of the NSW Government’s total deregulation of the point-to-point industry. A Bill is expected to be introduced to Parliament by the end of the year and funds will be distributed next year.

From <https://afndaily.com.au> 09/24/2022

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## **NEW ZEALAND: Aerospace Sector to Reach New Heights with Govt Strategy and Funding**

New Zealand’s aerospace sector will be strengthened with the launch of the Government’s new Aerospace Strategy at the inaugural New Zealand Aerospace Summit in Christchurch, with further financial support for the ambitions of the sector also announced. “We have an incredibly innovative aerospace sector in New Zealand that has huge growth potential. The development of a new Aerospace Strategy will help set the general direction of growth in order to build a globally-competitive aerospace sector, while ensuring we keep New Zealanders and our national interests safe”, Economic and Regional Development Minister Stuart Nash said. “By 2030, we aim to have an aerospace sector of global importance that is coordinated in its activities, can leverage its shared strengths and is at the forefront of innovation. This strategy sets out ambitious goals and an action plan to guide us there,” Stuart Nash said.

Research, Science and Innovation Minister Dr Ayesha Verrall said the Government is taking action to ensure our research, science and innovation system is fit for purpose and enables productive innovation to occur in the aerospace industry. “To support our ambitions I am announcing up to \$9 million in new funding for international research partnerships with the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and \$3 million in funding for research projects under the Government’s Airspace Integration Trials Programme. “The aerospace sector undertakes an impressive amount of research and development and this is a great example of a knowledge based sector that will underpin future economic growth. “The Government sees aerospace becoming a key focus of our research ecosystem, creating opportunities for innovative highly skilled jobs,” Dr Verrall said.

Associate Transport Minister Kieran McAnulty said our clear skies and diversity of geography make New Zealand an ideal location for aerospace activity. “The Government’s aerospace strategy will make sure that regulations remain fit for purpose, and advanced aviation technology is integrated into transport networks without disadvantaging those who use the airspace. “We’ve heard from the sector

that there needs to be a well-resourced regulator with the ability to keep up with the fast-moving sector. “The Government will be providing \$3.7 million to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) for the establishment of an Emerging Technologies Programme. The programme will support the CAA to increase their regulatory capacity,” Kieran McNulty said. Minister Nash also announced the beginning of a review into New Zealand’s space policy.

“The Space Policy Review is an opportunity for New Zealanders to have their say on the values and policy objectives that inform our Government’s activities and engagements in space. “Feedback will contribute toward the development of a new National Space Policy that will capture our values regarding space and inform future space policy development, including any regulatory or legislative changes to the Outer Space and High-altitude Activities Act 2017,” Stuart Nash said.

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 09/05/2022

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## **Govt Partners with Industry to Explore Sustainable Wood Processing**

A new partnership between the Government and Oji Fibre Solutions could boost the development of sustainable wood products, hydrogen and bio-fuels at the Kinleith Mill near Tokoroa, creating jobs and reducing emissions across the economy Forestry Minister Stuart Nash announced today. “In order to build a low-emissions, high-wage economy, we need to explore innovative and sustainable solutions across all sectors. In the wood processing sector, there is the opportunity to integrate bio-manufacturing, which means producing bio-energy and high value bio-chemicals through the development of an advanced bio-economy manufacturing cluster,” Stuart Nash said. “Oji Fibre Solutions is a world-leader in pulp, paper and packaging products, and the Kinleith Mill employs over 500 people in the South Waikato.

This joint feasibility study is the perfect opportunity to think differently about the way we process wood in New Zealand, to tap into the bio-economy, and harness the valuable by-products of wood fibre. “Throughout this study, we’ll investigate how we can make high-value and sustainable bio-products from wood. This could create high-wage, highly-skilled jobs as well as unlocking regional economic opportunities and ultimately building a productive, sustainable and inclusive bio-economy. “This partnership is one of the first tangible actions from the draft Forestry and Wood Processing Industry Transformation Plan I launched in August. A key focus of the Plan is how to add value to the forestry sector by processing logs domestically rather than sending them off-shore for other countries to extract value. “The forestry and wood processing sector has significant growth potential, and innovative ways of thinking like this study will help will help the sector decarbonise, support local job creation and drive the circular economy,” Stuart Nash said.

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 09/08/2022



## **Govt Helps Small Businesses Get Paid on Time**

The Government is adding to the support it has offered New Zealand's small businesses by introducing new measures to help ensure they get paid on time. A Business Payment Practices disclosure regime is being established to improve information and transparency around business-to-business payment practices across the economy, Small Business Minister Stuart Nash announced today. "Small businesses account for more than 97 per cent of all businesses in New Zealand. Late and overdue payments have a negative impact, causing unnecessary stress and uncertainty, while extended payment terms can cause real harm – particularly when a supplier has no choice but to accept them on a 'take it or leave it' basis," Stuart Nash said. Large firms (those with revenue over \$33 million a year) will be required to publicly report on their own payment practices, particularly late payments, and the length of time between the receipt of invoices and full payment.

This information will need to be submitted every six months, which is consistent with similar regimes in Australia and the United Kingdom. "The Small Business Council's Small Business Strategy identified a number of challenges facing New Zealand's business communities and the Government is committed to helping. "Small businesses are less resilient to poor payment practices because they are not as well-equipped or resourced to endure such practices. Many businesses are also reluctant to push for prompt payment because of fear of damaging relationships. Poor payment practices can have flow-on effects for the wider economy, particularly in times of economic uncertainty. "Large firms will also be required to publish payment practice information on their own websites, bringing in another layer of transparency. Those who fail to disclose payment practice information may face compliance notices and penalties.

"The Business Payment Practices disclosure regime will help small businesses make decisions on who to do business with and encourage larger firms to improve their payment practices to manage any reputational risk," Stuart Nash said. Further consultation with business communities will take place in the coming months on the specific reporting measures.

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 09/16/2022

## **More Transparency, Less red-Tape for Modernised Charities Sector**

The Charities Amendment Bill has been introduced today which will modernise the charities sector by increasing transparency, improving access to justice services and reducing the red-tape that smaller charities face, Minister for the Community and

Voluntary Sector Priyanca Radhakrishnan said. “These changes will make a meaningful difference to over 28,000 registered charities across New Zealand that play a significant role in supporting our communities,” Priyanca Radhakrishnan said. “It will ensure that legal settings are up to date, fit-for-purpose, and will support charities to get on with their important work, while also safeguarding public trust and confidence in the sector. “Kiwis have recently been rated the second-most generous country in the world. Our charitable sector has an income of over \$21 billion and these changes will continue to promote public trust and confidence in charitable giving,” Priyanca Radhakrishnan said.

The changes proposed in the bill also include reduced reporting requirements for very small charities, and a more accessible tribunal for charities that want to appeal decisions. “This will free up resources to allow volunteers to spend more time focusing on communities and doing the mahi they are passionate about,” Priyanca Radhakrishnan said. “The work our smaller charities do is just as important as the work of those that are more widely known. “It is important that our system doesn’t just work for those who have the resources to navigate it. We need to ensure that the services that are available, and access to them, are equitable,” Priyanca Radhakrishnan said. To make it easier and less costly for charities to appeal decisions, the bill empowers the Taxation Review Authority to hear Charities Act appeals. The Taxation and Charities Review Authority, will be more accessible for charities than the current system that requires charities to appeal decisions at the High Court. Charities will have more time to lodge an appeal and can self-represent at the Authority to avoid legal costs.

“Alongside the introduction of the bill, we are also working on non-legislative changes to further improve the sector, including requirements for larger charities to report reasons for accumulating funds,” Priyanca Radhakrishnan said. “I expect the bill to have its first reading shortly, and then to be referred to a Select Committee for a period of six months. I encourage anyone, particularly those from the charitable sector, to make a submission so that we can work together to strengthen a sector that contributes significantly to the collective wellbeing of all New Zealanders,” Priyanca Radhakrishnan said.

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 09/21/2022

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## **Dairy Sector Results – Fonterra Announces FY22 Annual Results**

Fonterra today announced a strong set of results for the financial year ending 31 July 2022, reflecting a 2021/22 Farmgate Milk Price of NZ\$9.30 per kgMS and normalised profit after tax of NZ\$591 million. With a total dividend of 20 cents per share to our fully shared-up farmers – comprising of an interim dividend of 5 cents per share and a final dividend of 15 cents per share – the final cash pay-out for farmers is \$9.50. Total Group normalised Earnings Before Interest and Taxes (EBIT) was NZ\$991

million, up NZ\$39 million or 4% on the prior year. Chief Executive Miles Hurrell says despite the challenges including increased costs associated with supply chain volatility, 2021/22 was a good year for the Co-op. “These results demonstrate that our decisions relating to product mix, market diversification, quality products and resilient supply chain, mean the Co-op is able to deliver both a strong milk price and robust financial performance in a tough global operating environment.

“The Co-op is pleased to be able to pay a total dividend of 20 cents per share for our farmer owners and unit holders. And this year’s higher Farmgate Milk Price is the strongest it has ever been, which is great news for our farmers. New Zealand also benefits from this, with \$13.7 billion returned into the economy in milk price payments alone this year. “Importantly, one year on, the Co-op is making tangible progress against our strategy – namely to focus on New Zealand milk, be a leader in sustainability and a leader in dairy innovation and science. “As part of the strategic review of the ownership of our milk pools outside New Zealand, we continue to make progress, with the sales process for the Soprole business progressing. Meanwhile, we’ve looked at a number of options for our Australian business and have decided that it’s in the Co-op’s best interests to maintain full ownership.

“Australia plays an important role in our consumer strategy with a number of common and complementary brands and products and as a destination for our New Zealand milk solids. The business is going well, and it will play a key role in helping us get to our 2030 strategic targets. “As part of our strategy to 2030, we set a goal of a return of about \$1 billion to shareholders and unitholders which anticipated divestments including Soprole and a stake in our Australian business. Even though we have decided not to sell a stake in our Australian business, we are still committed to targeting a significant capital return to our shareholders and unitholders. The amount of any capital return will ultimately be determined on a number of factors including the successful completion of the divestment programme as well as our ongoing debt and earnings levels.

“Our positive performance in 2021/22 would not have been possible without the continuing hard work of employees and our farmer owners, and I want to thank every one of them for their commitment and support.” Performance Mr Hurrell says despite tight supply there was robust demand from global customers for dairy, which has helped Fonterra deliver a strong milk price and financial performance. “Total Group Revenue increased \$2.3 billion to \$23.4 billion due to higher product prices, but sales volumes decreased in FY22 due to short-term shifts in demand and ongoing shipping and supply disruptions. “Strong margins in the Ingredients channel, particularly in the final quarter, resulted in an increase in our gross profit. However, total gross margin was down due to the higher cost of milk on our Foodservice and Consumer channels during the year.

“Our Total Group normalised EBIT of NZ\$991 million, up 4%, reflects improved

margins in our Ingredients channel but is partially offset by the higher milk price which placed pressure on margins in our Consumer and Foodservice channels. “A series of geopolitical and economic events also impacted our performance – including a NZ\$80 million adverse revaluation of the Co-op’s Sri Lankan business payables, due to the devaluation of the rupee. “Total Group operating expenses were up in FY22, by 7% to NZ\$2.4 billion, with underlying operating expenses increasing due in part to inflationary pressures and supply costs. “Our normalised profit after tax of NZ\$591 million was up 1% on last year, due to higher earnings.

“We have higher inventory than usual at the end of the 2022 financial year due to stronger milk collections towards the end of the season coinciding with factory constraints, short-term impacts on demand and shipping disruptions. 88% of our year inventory is contracted, which means the sale price has been agreed and the product contracted, however the inventory had not been shipped at the balance date. The first six weeks of the new financial year have showed good progress with shipment of this inventory. We have flexibility in relation to inventory levels due to the strength of our balance sheet. “The increased inventory, coupled with the higher milk price, has also increased our working capital throughout the year, and our net debt position at year end. Our net debt was NZ\$5.3 billion, up NZ\$1 billion, and as a result our Debt/EBITDA ratio increased to 3.2x from 2.7x and our gearing ratio increased from 38.5% to 42.4%.

We expect these measures to improve as our working capital returns to normal levels. Even with the higher working capital, our return on capital has increased from 6.6% to 6.8%, as a result of the improvement in our EBIT. Mr Hurrell says FY22 saw a mixed performance across Fonterra’s three regional markets. “Africa, Middle East, Europe, North Asia, Americas (AMENA) normalised EBIT was NZ\$527 million, up 57%, due to the improved gross margin in its Ingredients channel. Asia Pacific (APAC) normalised EBIT was NZ\$237 million, down 22%, with the improved performance in APAC’s Ingredients channel more than offset by the somewhat weaker Consumer and Foodservice channels. Greater China normalised EBIT was NZ\$432 million, up 7%, with an improved performance in its Ingredients channel partially offset by lower margins in the Foodservice and Consumer channels, as a result of the higher cost of milk.

Strategy Mr Hurrell says it’s been a year since the Co-op announced its long-term strategy. “While it’s still early days and the shift from reset to growth continues, I am pleased with the progress we are making driving greater customer value and meeting the increasing demand for sustainable dairy and innovative nutrition and science solutions. “Over the past 12 months we have been working through how we adapt our organisational structure to accelerate progress against our strategy. To grow the value we derive from our New Zealand milk through our sustainability credentials, innovation, and nutrition science, we have established two new Fonterra Management Team (FMT) roles. These two roles and the subsequent structural

realignment serve to increase visibility and focus on innovation and strategic implementation – and drive performance in these areas.

“We continue to believe that New Zealand milk is the highest quality and most sought-after milk in the world. Our milk has a carbon footprint, one third the global average for milk production due to our grass-fed farming model. Pleasingly, the Co-op has maintained its share of the New Zealand milk supply market in a very competitive market. “We’ve also made progress with our capital restructure and will continue to engage with Government. We believe a globally competitive farmer owned Co-op is in the best interests of the dairy industry, rural communities and New Zealand. “Equally in the 12 months to 31 July 2022, Fonterra has continued to strive for a better future for the environment upon which we depend and has made solid progress against some of our key sustainability targets.

Water use by manufacturing sites in water-constrained regions reduced, now 6.6% below FY18 baseline, and around 71% of shareholder farms now have a Farm Environment Plan – a substantial undertaking by our Farmer Shareholders and the Farm Source team. “To respond to the ongoing expectations of customers and communities for more sustainable products, we have continued to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, and transition away from the use of coal. We continue to progress the decarbonisation of our light and heavy vehicle fleets, and we have progressed the on-farm trial of Asparagopsis seaweed as supplemental feed for dairy cows. We are also working in partnership with the New Zealand Government on an agricultural emissions partnership. “The Co-op is absolutely committed to taking a leadership position in sustainability right across our value chain, investing significantly to provide leadership against global competitors and to build long-term resilience.

“In 2021/22 Fonterra continued its long and proud heritage of dairy innovation, to solve problems our customers face in their operations and to help people around the world live healthier and longer lives. “We have continued to lead the way in dairy science and innovation, both in the products we’re innovating and the way in which we innovate. Two examples of this innovation are the MinION genome sequencing device, which provides dairy DNA results at pace and at a quarter of the previous cost, and the launch of an exciting new Whey Protein Concentrate (WPC) which can be used to create different textures in high protein yoghurt. “In summary, in 2021/22 we have made good progress in the implementation of our strategy to increase the value of every drop of milk and deliver higher returns. We look forward to reporting further progress updates in the future, and we remain committed to delivering our 10-year aspirations,” says Mr Hurrell.

FY23 Outlook Fonterra has announced a forecast 2022/23 Farmgate Milk Price range of NZ\$8.50–\$10.00 per kgMS, with a midpoint of NZ\$9.25 per kgMS. The Co-op also forecasts 2023 normalised earnings guidance of 45-60 cents per share.

“The longer-term outlook for dairy remains positive. And in the medium-term, we expect to see an easing in some of the geopolitical events, namely the COVID-19 lockdowns in China and the economic challenges in Sri Lanka. This has been reflected in our earnings guidance and forecast Farmgate Milk Price for the 2022/23 season. “We continue to monitor a number of risks. The strength of our balance sheet means we remain in a strong position to weather uncertainty and market volatility. Our ability to refocus our product mix through our diverse and flexible operations footprint, means the Co-op’s milk will continue to be delivered to wherever the most value can be obtained for our farmer owners. “The future for our Co-op is exciting,” says Mr Hurrell.

Non-GAAP financial information Fonterra uses several non-GAAP measures when discussing financial performance. Non-GAAP measures are not defined or specified by NZ IFRS. Management believes that these measures provide useful information as they provide valuable insight on the underlying performance of the business. They may be used internally to evaluate the underlying performance of business units and to analyse trends. These measures are not uniformly defined or utilised by all companies. Accordingly, these measures may not be comparable with similarly titled measures used by other companies. Non-GAAP financial measures should not be viewed in isolation nor considered as a substitute for measures reported in accordance with NZ IFRS. Non-GAAP measures are not subject to audit unless they are included in Fonterra’s audited annual financial statements.

Please refer to the non-GAAP measures section in Fonterra’s 2022 Annual Review for reconciliation of NZ IFRS to non-GAAP measures, and the Glossary for definitions of non-GAAP measures referred to by Fonterra. About Fonterra Fonterra is a co-operative owned and supplied by about 9,000 farming families in Aotearoa New Zealand. Through the spirit of co-operation and a can-do attitude, Fonterra’s farmers and employees share the goodness of our milk through innovative consumer, foodservice and ingredients brands. Sustainability is at the heart of everything we do, and we’re committed to leaving things in a better way than we found them. We are passionate about supporting our communities by Doing Good Together.

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# UNPAN-AP Editorial Department, RCOCI

