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ASIA-PACIFIC GOVERNANCE WATCH

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Asia-Pacific Governance Watch

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1、 Government Policy and Legislation

Asia-Pacific

OECD Presents New Transparency Framework for Crypto-Assets to G20

The OECD delivered today a new global tax transparency framework to provide for the reporting and exchange of information with respect to crypto-assets. The Crypto-Asset Reporting Framework (CARF) responds to a G20 request that the OECD develop a framework for the automatic exchange of information between countries on crypto-assets. The CARF will be presented to G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors for discussion at their next meeting on 12-13 October in Washington D.C, as part of the latest OECD Secretary-General's Tax Report. The

new transparency initiative, developed together with G20 countries, comes against the backdrop of a rapid adoption of the use of crypto-assets for a wide range of investment and financial uses. Unlike traditional financial products, crypto-assets can be transferred and held without the intervention of traditional financial intermediaries, such as banks, and without any central administrator having full visibility on either the transactions carried out or on crypto-asset holdings. The crypto market has also given rise to new intermediaries and service providers, such as crypto-asset exchanges and wallet providers, many of which currently remain unregulated.

These developments mean that crypto-assets and related transactions are not comprehensively covered by the OECD/G20 Common Reporting Standard (CRS), increasing the likelihood of their use for tax evasion while undermining the progress made in tax transparency through the adoption of the CRS. “The Common Reporting Standard has been very successful in the fight against international tax evasion. In 2021, over 100 jurisdictions exchanged information on 111 million financial accounts, covering total assets of EUR 11 trillion,” OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann said. “Today’s presentation of the new crypto-asset reporting framework and amendments to the Common Reporting Standard will ensure that the tax transparency architecture remains up-to-date and effective.” In this vein, the CARF will ensure transparency with respect to crypto-asset transactions, through automatically exchanging such information with the jurisdictions of residence of taxpayers on an annual basis, in a standardised manner similar to the CRS.

The CARF will target any digital representation of value that relies on a cryptographically secured distributed ledger or a similar technology to validate and secure transactions. Carve-outs are foreseen for assets that cannot be used for payment or investment purposes and for assets already fully covered by the CRS. Entities or individuals that provide services effectuating exchange transactions in crypto-assets for, or on behalf of customers would be obliged to report under the CARF. The CARF contains model rules that can be transposed into domestic legislation, and commentary to help administrations with implementation. Over the next months, the OECD will be taking forward work on the legal and operational instruments to facilitate the international exchange of information collected on that basis of the CARF and to ensure its effective and widespread implementation, including the timing for starting exchanges under the CARF.

The OECD has also put forward to the G20 a set of further amendments to the CRS, intended to modernise its scope to comprehensively cover digital financial products and to improve its operation, taking into account the experience gained by countries and business. As with the CARF, this work will be complemented with an update to the international legal and operational mechanisms for the automatic exchange of information pursuant to the amended CRS, as well as with a coordinated timelines to bring the agreed amendments into effect. Media queries should be directed to Pascal Saint-Amans (+33 1 4524 9108), Director of the OECD Centre for Tax Policy and

Administration, Lawrence Speer (+33 1 4524 7970) 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/> 10/10/2022

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East Asia

China: Works for Shared Future for Mankind

Nearly a decade ago, when then newly-elected leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC) made its debut at the Great Hall of People after the first plenary session of the 18th CPC Central Committee, the world was speculating how the world's most populous nation and second largest economy led by Xi Jinping would reach out to the rest of the global community, and what kind of role the country would play in an era of mounting changes and challenges. During his first overseas trip as Chinese president in March 2013, Xi, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, elaborated on China's vision of fostering a new type of international relations with win-win cooperation at the core and building a community with a shared future for mankind. Over the past decade, under Xi's leadership, China has been committed to the path of peaceful development, and devoted itself to addressing global challenges, facilitating win-win cooperation and making the global governance system more just and more equitable. As we have observed, China's approach is in line with today's zeitgeist, and conducive to maintaining peace and stability, bolstering world economic growth and building a world of common prosperity and with a shared future.

WIN-WIN COOPERATION

Also in 2013, the Chinese president proposed the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road successively in his visits to Kazakhstan and Indonesia. This is how the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) took shape. Nine years on, the initiative has substantially strengthened partnerships, promoted connectivity and pushed forward common development worldwide. The annual trade volume between China and around 150 countries which have participated in the BRI expanded from 1.04 trillion U.S. dollars in 2013 to 1.8 trillion dollars in 2021, a quantum leap of 73 percent over eight years. According to a World Bank report, the initiative could help lift 7.6 million people out of extreme poverty and 32 million out of moderate poverty globally, and boost trade by 2.8-9.7 percent for participating countries and by 1.7-6.2 percent for the whole world. Mohamed Fayed Farhat, director of Egypt's state-run Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies in Cairo, said China-proposed initiatives reflect the country's contribution to global development and its support for developing countries and emerging economies. "China defends the causes of developing countries on the international stage, and also plays an active role in

important international organizations," the expert noted.

FOR BETTER GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

In a rapidly changing world, one of the world's priorities is the need to improve global governance. The lingering COVID-19 pandemic, regional conflicts, backlash against globalization and other complicated factors are intertwining with each other, and the deficits in peace, security, trust and governance are widening. On various occasions in the past decade, the Chinese president has underlined that the solutions lie in real multilateralism and to the UN-centered international system, as well as in joint efforts to forge a new type of international relations, which features mutual respect, equity and justice, and win-win cooperation, and build a community with a shared future for mankind. In his speech at the general debate of the 75th session of the UN General Assembly, Xi called for staying true to multilateralism and safeguarding the international system with the UN at its core.

"Global governance should be based on the principle of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits so as to ensure that all countries enjoy equal rights and opportunities and follow the same rules," Xi said. Over the years, China has been walking the talk by actively involving in such global affairs as the pandemic fight, poverty reduction, climate actions and peacekeeping, and the building of an open world economy. China has made itself a builder of world peace, a contributor to global development, a defender of the international order, a provider of public goods. Shaping a more just and effective global governance needs a collective drive. That is why China has been working relentlessly with other countries, notably the developing world, for this end. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the world's largest and most populous regional institution, stands as a good example of how Beijing is working with its partners to promote the new type of international relations.

In its 21-year history, the SCO member countries have been working closely to enhance cooperation in various fields including security, economy and trade, public health and culture. It has developed into a constructive force in improving global governance and promoting stability and development. With the rise of emerging economies, developing countries have become more vocal in global governance, and begun to push the globalization process toward a fairer and more inclusive direction through various multilateral cooperation mechanisms and platforms, said Sheriff Ghali Ibrahim, head of the department of political science and international relations at the University of Abuja. China has proved to be a pioneer, since its concept of globalization has largely promoted a shared future for humanity, with no discrimination, segregation, or exclusion, the Nigerian expert said.

A FUTURE SHARED BY ALL

The still ravaging pandemic is a constant reminder that people are living in a global village, where the fate of all nations has never been so closely connected before. In order to better respond to such planetary woes in the future, the international

community is expected to stand in solidarity and work in harmony with one accord. With a deep insight into the world's shared aspirations, the Chinese president has proposed the Global Development Initiative and the Global Security Initiative, contributing China's wisdom to eliminating the deficits in peace, security, trust and governance, and highlighting the necessity and importance of building a world with common development and collective security in the profoundly changing global landscape. For Sudheendra Kulkarni, former chairman of Indian think-tank Observer Research Foundation, development and security are "two sides of the same coin and both are indivisible."

"No country can achieve security if other countries are insecure, and no country can achieve development if other countries' development is in danger. We must consider security and development in a global context," Kulkarni said. Adhering to the concept of building a community with a shared future, China has been working together with the rest of the world to safeguard true multilateralism, maintain stable global supply chains, facilitate free trade and investment, and pursue green and low-carbon development. From its strong support for an open world economy to its firm commitment to carbon reduction and neutrality, China has shown its determination with actions. When attending the opening ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympics, Kyrgyz President Sadyr Zhaparov was deeply impressed by the motto "Together for a Shared Future."

"This (is) a call for the international community to build a community with a shared future for mankind. Whether we are a small country or a big country, in the context of globalization, we all have one future and one destiny," he told Xinhua in a recent interview. In the eyes of former Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, Xi's call for building a community with a shared future for mankind is highly relevant and necessary in this era. Building a sense of shared future is important for the world to avoid fragmentation and address challenges, and for Asia to safeguard peace and promote common development, Hatoyama said. "On the earth we live, not only the environment functions as a whole, but people are also interconnected."

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

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China to Ensure Implementation of Rent Exemption Policies for Market Entities

China will intensify its implementation of premises rent reductions or exemptions for small and micro-sized firms and self-employed businesses in the services sector, the state-assets regulator has said. All rent relief policies and measures should be implemented effectively, according to a circular released by the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council. China has announced that small and micro-sized companies and self-employed businesses in the services sector that are tenants of state-owned premises in county-level

administrative areas classified as medium and high-risk for COVID-19 will enjoy a six-month rent exemption this year, while those in other areas will be exempted from paying rent for three months. The circular ordered all centrally administrated state-owned enterprises to fully complete their general rent reduction and exemption tasks before the end of November. All central and local state-owned enterprises should establish supervision and inspection mechanisms, guiding subordinate firms to earnestly implement the policy of reducing or exempting rents, the circular said.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 10/13/2022

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Chinese Lawmakers to Deliberate Draft Revisions to Laws

Chinese lawmakers will deliberate a draft amendment to China's Legislation Law, which highlights strengthened enforcement and supervision of the Constitution, later this week. The draft amendment also aims to improve the system and mechanism for better cohesion between legislative and reform decisions, Zang Tiewei, a spokesperson for the Legislative Affairs Commission of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, China's top legislature, said Monday. The draft amendment will be submitted on Wednesday to a session of the NPC Standing Committee for a first reading, Zang said. It will also improve the legislative procedure and working mechanism of the NPC and its Standing Committee, supplement relevant content to meet the needs of supervision system reform, improve relevant provisions of local laws and regulations, and further improve the system for the recording and review of normative documents. A draft revision to the Administrative Reconsideration Law will also be given the first reading at this session, Zang said, adding that relevant principles, responsibilities and support will be further specified. The session will also review the third draft revision of the Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests and the third draft of the Yellow River Protection Law.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 10/24/2022

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Xi Stresses Implementing Guiding Principles of Key Party Congress in Armed Forces

Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, on Monday instructed the armed forces to study, publicize and implement the guiding principles of the 20th CPC National Congress, and strive to achieve the goal set for the centenary of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). Xi, also Chinese president and chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), made the remarks when attending a meeting of leading military cadres. Zhang Youxia and He Weidong, both members of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and CMC vice chairmen, as well as Xu Qiliang, attended and addressed the meeting. In the unusual and extraordinary five years since the 19th CPC National Congress in

2017, the CMC has led the armed forces to achieve major progress and realize major transformations in national defense and military, Xi said.

The CMC has upheld the Party's absolute leadership over the people's armed forces, maintained and expanded the rapid and favorable development in the cause of building a strong military, and brought military modernization and combat capacity to a higher level, he said. The newly-concluded successful 20th CPC National Congress is of great significance to the country's drive to build a modern socialist country in all respects and advance national rejuvenation on all fronts. It is also vital to fulfilling the goal set for the PLA centenary and building the armed forces into world class forces, he said. It will be the most important political task for the whole Party, the country and the armed forces to study, publicize and implement the guiding principles of the 20th CPC National Congress, he said. Stressing that the armed forces should focus their efforts on realizing their centenary goal, Xi said that this will be the military's central task in the next five years, one that demands full strength and should be accomplished as scheduled.

Noting that the first plenary session of the 20th CPC Central Committee named the members of the new CMC, Xi said it is a major political arrangement made by the CPC Central Committee based on the overall cause of the Party, the country and the military. CMC members must bear in mind the trust placed on them by the Party and the people and the expectations of the officers and soldiers of the armed forces, and dedicate themselves to the work of the CMC, Xi added. Demanding that this year's work be finished as scheduled, Xi stressed the importance of plans for the next year to ensure a good start to the work in the armed forces. Before the meeting, Xi met with delegates, specially invited delegates and non-voting participants of the PLA and armed police forces present at the 20th CPC National Congress and had a group photo taken with them. State Councilor and Defense Minister Wei Fenghe attended the meeting. Other attendees included Li Shangfu, Liu Zhenli, Miao Hua and Zhang Shengmin, who are all CMC members, and Li Zuocheng.

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China Unveils Regulation on Boosting Development of Self-employed Businesses

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang has signed a State Council decree unveiling a regulation on advancing the development of self-employed businesses. The regulation, which will take effect on Nov. 1, 2022, has set out specific preferential policies in areas including optimizing the business environment and protecting the lawful rights and interests of self-employed businesses. The regulation clarifies the role of self-employed businesses in the socialist market economy and the basic principles for promoting their development, and promises to simplify administrative procedures and improve the business environment to create favorable conditions for

the healthy development of such businesses. Meanwhile, the working mechanism for promoting the development of the businesses is set up in the regulation. Support for these businesses in areas including registration of market entities, annual reporting services, supply of business premises as well as capital, taxation, finance, social security, entrepreneurship and employment will be provided by the government and its relevant departments. The country will also strengthen protection of the legitimate rights and interests of self-employed businesses, according to the regulation.

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CPC Leadership Makes Arrangements for Implementing Party Congress Guiding Principles

The Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee convened a meeting on Tuesday to make arrangements for studying, publicizing and implementing the guiding principles of the Party's 20th National Congress. Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, presided over the meeting, which also deliberated the regulations on strengthening and safeguarding the Party Central Committee's centralized, unified leadership, and the detailed rules for the implementation of the eight-point decision on work conduct. Studying, publicizing and implementing the guiding principles of the 20th CPC National Congress is a primary political task for the Party and the country at present and for some time to come, the meeting said. The meeting demanded a deep understanding of the decisive significance of the establishment of both Comrade Xi Jinping's core position on the Party Central Committee and in the Party as a whole and the guiding role of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.

It also stressed understanding of major issues including Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, adapting Marxism to the Chinese context and the needs of the times, and the Chinese path to modernization. The comprehension of the strategic arrangements made by the 20th CPC National Congress for building China into a modern socialist country in all respects was underscored at the meeting. The meeting emphasized that the arrangements and requirements set forth by the 20th CPC National Congress ought to be implemented in all aspects of economic and social development. It also stressed preparing, both mentally and in the work, for all kinds of complex issues. Upholding and strengthening the centralized, unified leadership of the CPC Central Committee is the common political responsibility of the entire Party, the meeting underscored. It stressed maintaining a high degree of unity ideologically, politically, and in action with the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core. The meeting also underscored continuous efforts in addressing the problems of formalities for formalities' sake and bureaucratism, and maintaining close ties with the people.

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Zooming into CPC Constitution's Latest Revision Process

The resolution on an amendment to the Constitution of the Communist Party of China (CPC) was adopted at the closing session of the 20th CPC National Congress on Oct. 22. The approval was announced by Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee. This is the ninth amendment to the CPC Constitution since China's reform and opening up. Over the past 40 years, the Party has timely incorporated its new achievements in theoretical innovation and practical development into the Party Constitution, so that it plays a crucial role in guiding the development of the Party and the country. During the past few years, many Party members and organs have suggested a revision to the CPC Constitution at the 20th CPC National Congress, in accordance with the changing situations and in light of the needs for advancing the Party's work and enhancing Party building. Similar suggestions were also received in January this year when the CPC Central Committee was soliciting opinions for its report to the congress.

On May 27, at a meeting of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee presided over by Xi, the decision was made to amend the CPC Constitution and a special group was established for the draft amendment. Three days later, the first meeting of the group marked the official beginning of the work on the revision of the Party Constitution. The group followed principles set by the CPC Central Committee to make sure the amendment fully reflects the latest achievement in adapting Marxism to the Chinese context and the needs of the times, and the new ideas, new thinking, and new strategies on national governance put forward since the 19th CPC National Congress. Fully encouraging intraparty democracy and pooling the wisdom of the entire Party is also one of the principles. It is a hallmark of the process of drafting the amendment. In July and September, the CPC Central Committee Political Bureau and its standing committee held meetings to deliberate the draft amendment to the CPC Constitution.

Xi paid great attention to soliciting opinions from various sectors. From early June to late August, he presided over five symposiums, hearing relevant opinions from leading officials of various regions across the country as well as the military, and discussed the matter with them. A unanimous suggestion put forward by the regions and departments when they were asked to offer opinions was to incorporate new developments in Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era into the Constitution of the CPC. During the 20th CPC National Congress, the draft amendment was further improved after absorbing opinions and suggestions put forth by delegates to the congress. The incorporation of the new developments in Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era into the CPC Constitution reflects a collective and earnest aspiration of the Party as a whole, the entire country, and Chinese people of all ethnic groups, according to the

delegates.

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China to Continue Implementing the Policy Package and Follow-up Policies to Boost Economic Recovery and Growth

China will continue to effectively implement the policy package for stabilizing the economy and the follow-up policies, to further promote economic recovery and growth, according to the decision made at the State Council's Executive Meeting chaired by Premier Li Keqiang on Wednesday. The meeting urged efforts to fully study and implement the guidelines laid out at the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. After arrangements are made, the key lies in delivering them on the ground. All departments should perform their duties diligently and ensure effective policy implementation, to strive for sound economic and social development. Since April this year, to cope with shocks from greater-than-expected factors, a policy package for stabilizing the economy and follow-up policies have been introduced in a timely and decisive manner, with front-loaded implementation of the policies outlined at the Central Economic Work Conference and in the government work report.

These policy measures are both forceful and appropriate, which are conducive to stabilizing the current economic performance and promoting sustained development. The economic slide in early second quarter was reversed in time. The economy is stabilizing and picking up, which is no easy feat. This also creates a critical window of opportunity for boosting the upward momentum. Efforts will be made to ensure policy implementation and further unlock policy effects, keep employment and prices stable, secure better economic performance in the fourth quarter over the third and keep major economic indicators within a proper range. The meeting urged greater efforts to implement on the ground the policy package for stabilizing the economy and its follow-up policies. Policies such as tax refunds, tax deferrals, fee cuts and pro-job subsidies will be thoroughly executed. Efforts will be made to ensure stable energy supply. Further efforts will be made to keep transportation and logistics services open and smooth.

Greater support will be introduced to promote sustained and sound development of the platform economy. The taskforces that supervise and assist the efforts for stabilizing overall economic performance should continue to supervise and coordinate the settlement of problems. Market vitality and social creativity will be better unlocked. China has a hardworking and intelligent people, and over 160 million market entities: this is what makes China's economy resilient. It is imperative to keep advancing reform and opening-up, deepen the reform of government functions, and foster a better business environment. Supervision and inspection will be enforced to ensure full policy delivery to anchor market expectations and boost

confidence of market entities. All localities and all departments must fulfill their duties in meeting people's basic needs, and deliver on the policies of expanded subsistence allowance coverage and provision of unemployment subsidy and relief allowance.

The mechanism of raising social benefits pro rata with price increase will be earnestly implemented. Local governments with real difficulties will be subsidized by the central government as appropriate, to make sure people's basic living needs are well met. "Overall, the policy package for stabilizing the economy and the follow-up policies are forceful and are warmly welcomed by localities. Mature projects should be taken forward without delay, and the approval procedures for projects that can get started within the year should be simplified wherever possible," Li said. The meeting noted the need to expedite the delivery of the policies for spurring investment and consumption, to address the problem of insufficient effective demand. Fiscal and financial policy instruments that support key projects and equipment upgrading and renovation should generate more physical gains in the fourth quarter.

It is imperative to ensure efficient operation of the relevant coordination mechanism, to kick-start more projects and accelerate construction while ensuring project quality. Funds for projects that fail to start as scheduled will be reallocated to new ones. Private investment will be supported to participate in key projects. The issuance of loans for equipment upgrading and renovation will be expedited, and purchase of homegrown and foreign-made equipment will be supported on an equal basis, to expand manufacturing demand and guide expectations. Efforts will be made to promote the recovery of consumption as the main driving force for the economy. Construction of key projects and equipment upgrading and renovation should be better aligned with the goal of spurring consumption.

Public works programs will be expanded to create jobs, raise income and boost consumption. Equipment upgrading and renovation by micro, small and medium-sized businesses and related to consumption will be supported by the special re-lending facility and government-funded interest subsidies. Policies will be implemented to support consumption of big-ticket items such as automobiles and consumer services. City-specific policies will be adopted to meet people's basic housing needs and the need for improved housing conditions. "The policy-backed and development-oriented financial instruments and the special re-lending facility for equipment upgrading and renovation function as two important levers. We must continue to bring them into effect, with a special focus on boosting consumption," Li said. The meeting noted that the average time needed for refunding newly added value-added tax (VAT) credits in the manufacturing industries has been cut to two working days.

On top of continuing the practice of prompt refunding upon application, intensified efforts will be made to improve tax refund services for micro and small businesses and self-employed households, to see that all eligible VAT credits are refunded

whenever and wherever possible, and that businesses will benefit as early as possible, in a bid to support market entities, ensure job creation and meet people's essential needs. Tax fraud, tax evasion and disruptions to the tax refund policy will be dealt with in accordance with law. "The large-scale VAT credit refund has played a vital role in helping firms overcome difficulties and steadying the economy, and has cleared most of the refund backlog accumulated over the years. This policy treats state-owned, private and foreign market entities as equals, and has been a widely welcomed boon to the cash flow of businesses," Li said.

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China's Draft Law on Barrier-free Environment Up for Debate

A draft law on the building of a barrier-free environment, the first of its kind in China, was tabled before lawmakers for the first deliberation on Thursday. The draft law, which is being deliberated at a session of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, specifies the beneficiaries as "members of society in need of barrier-free environments." It aims to deliver more benefits to all members of society on the basis of protecting the rights of people with disabilities and the elderly to an accessible environment. The draft stipulates higher requirements for the construction and renovation of accessible facilities, and calls on local governments to roll out and ensure the implementation of plans to renovate existing facilities that fail to meet the mandatory accessibility standards. While providing public information or releasing information on emergencies, government departments must ensure accessibility for people with disabilities, according to the draft law. In the proposed legislation, it is also stipulated that state organs, as well as public service places run by organizations tasked with managing public affairs in accordance with the law, must remove barriers for those with disabilities.

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Chinese Lawmakers Consider Draft Law Revision on Protection of Women

Chinese lawmakers are mulling a draft law revision to improve safeguarding the rights and interests of women, especially disadvantaged groups such as impoverished, older, and disabled women. The draft revision to the Law on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women was submitted Thursday to the National People's Congress Standing Committee for a third reading. Governments at all levels and relevant departments should enhance support for women in daily life, finding jobs, and starting businesses, according to the draft. The draft defines the supervisory duties of relevant departments in fighting against actions that harm the rights and interests of women employees relating to work and social security.

Abducting of, trafficking in, or kidnapping women is prohibited; buying women who are abducted, trafficked in, or kidnapped is prohibited; obstructing the rescue of women who are abducted, trafficked in, or kidnapped is prohibited, according to the draft. It also highlights that authorities, including governments, police, as well as villagers and residents committees, shall report these crimes immediately. Measures shall be taken to rescue women who have been abducted or trafficked. The rescued women shall be well-settled and given help and care.

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Economical, Intensive Use of Water Resources Highlighted in Draft Law Revision

Chinese lawmakers are mulling a draft law revision to strengthen the economical and intensive use of water resources in the Yellow River, the "mother river" of the Chinese nation. The draft revision to the law, which was submitted Thursday to the National People's Congress Standing Committee, specifies that the water resources of the Yellow River basin should be used in a carefully calculated and strictly budgeted manner. In this regard, the draft proposes encouraging and promoting the use of advanced water-saving technologies and accelerating the development of water-efficient production and lifestyles. The country will coordinate the construction of flood-control systems in the mainstream and tributaries of the Yellow River and strengthen the synergy of flood-control systems between basins, says the draft. Protection of the water source conservation areas of the Yellow River should be enhanced to bolster the ecological protection and restoration efforts in the Yellow River basin, according to the draft. It also stipulates that the country will intensify the comprehensive, systemic and source management of the Yellow River basin pollution from agricultural and industrial production and urban and rural activities.

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Whole-Process People's Democracy Highlighted in Draft Law Amendment

Chinese lawmakers are considering incorporating whole-process people's democracy into the Legislation Law. The draft amendment to the law was submitted to the ongoing session of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee for review on Thursday. The people-centered approach should be taken during the legislation, with whole-process people's democracy upheld and developed during the process, according to the draft. During the legislative process, human rights should be respected and protected, with social fairness and justice safeguarded, the draft noted. The draft proposed improving the legislative procedures and working mechanisms of the NPC and its Standing Committee, and

enriching the approach to legislative work. It also stipulated that the working bodies of the Standing Committee should set up local legislative outreach offices in light of actual needs, to solicit opinions from the grassroots and people from all walks of life on draft laws. Amending the Legislation Law is an institutional guarantee that legislation serves, relies on, benefits, and protects the people, said Shen Chunyao, director of the Legislative Affairs Commission of the NPC Standing Committee.

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Lawmakers Reviewing Report on Implementation of Law to Promote Rural Vitalization

Chinese lawmakers are reviewing a report that assesses the implementation of a law to promote rural vitalization. Submitted Friday to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress for deliberation, the report says that the law has been fully carried out by the central and local governments since it came into force in June 2021. The implementation of the law has helped nurture rural industries, promote rural affluence, and better conserve the rural ecological environment, according to the report. To date, 15 provincial-level regions nationwide have created local rules in coordination with the law. Regarding the challenges to rural vitalization, the report calls for efforts to guarantee adequate food supply, increase farmers' incomes, and promote green agriculture. In 2017, China proposed a rural vitalization strategy to accelerate the modernization of agriculture and rural areas. It has since adopted a host of policies to chart the roadmap for rural vitalization. This year, "promoting comprehensive rural vitalization" was incorporated into the country's government work report and the "No. 1 Central Document" as a primary task.

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JAPAN: Govt OKs Bill Against Money Laundering

The Japanese government Friday adopted a bill aimed at enhancing measures to prevent money laundering and cut off terrorist financing. The introduction of tighter regulations on crypto assets, which are highly anonymous and often used illegally, and tougher penalties against money laundering are the main items of the bill. The bill for revising six laws, including the law to prevent transfer of criminal proceeds and the foreign exchange and trade law, was adopted at a cabinet meeting. Last year, the Financial Action Task Force, a global financial watchdog, urged Japan to improve its measures against money laundering and terrorist financing. Under the revised legislation, crypto asset exchange service providers will be obliged to share information on users on both sides of transactions. The providers will also be required to make sure that they have the newest list of individuals and groups subject to sanctions.

Gov't Discussing Guidelines for Unification Church Probe

The Japanese government on Tuesday began discussing guidelines for its probe of the Unification Church, moving a step closer to questioning the controversial religious group with an eye on possibly requesting a court consider depriving it of tax benefits. The discussions came after Prime Minister Fumio Kishida last week instructed an investigation be launched into the church based on the "right to question" under the Religious Corporations Law in response to pressure from the public to address ties between members of his ruling party and the group, often labeled as a cult. Tetsuo Goda, a Cultural Affairs Agency executive, said he expects the direction of the guidelines to be set in the next meeting and called on a panel of experts advising his organization to discuss the issue from various perspectives "in light of the graveness and urgency" of the situation involving the church. If all goes to plan, the probe could begin by the end of this year. The panel, composed of priests as well as religious and legal scholars, is tasked with hammering out basic principles and conditions for the government to demand the church report on its operations and allow its executives to be questioned.

The process is deemed necessary as there is no precedent and the agency is seeking to avoid criticism that it is arbitrarily targeting the group and infringing on religious freedom in conducting such a probe. The Unification Church, founded in South Korea in 1954, has long been criticized for its pursuit of financially ruinous donations from followers. The group, now formally called the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, has also been notorious for "spiritual sales," in which it pressures people to buy vases and other items for exorbitant prices through the use of threats, such as invoking negative "ancestral karma." The religious law allows government oversight of religious corporations which, if they are suspected to have violated a law, can be compelled to have their senior representatives submit to questioning and asked to report their activities. If the investigation confirms that a religious corporation has violated laws and damaged public welfare, the government can request a court to order its "dissolution." Depending on a court judgment, the Unification Church could lose its status as a religious corporation and be deprived of tax benefits, although the church can still operate in Japan as an entity.

Kishida had previously been cautious about ordering a probe into the church partly due to concern it could violate the right to freedom of religion. But he has decided to take a more hardline approach after a series of new revelations about the church's connections with his Liberal Democratic Party lawmakers sparked public anger that it may have exerted political influence. Scrutiny of the church intensified after former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was fatally shot during an election campaign speech in early July. The man accused of murdering Abe believed the former prime minister

and his family members were linked to the church and entities affiliated with the religious group, known to have advocated anti-Communist and conservative views, according to investigators. The accused's mother is a committed follower of the Unification Church and it is known that her huge donations to the church ruined the family's finances. Hideyuki Teshigawara, who heads the church's reform promotion headquarters, has said the organization will "sincerely" accept the probe.

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Japan to Cut Household Electricity Bills by 20% to Fight Inflation

Japan will cut household electricity bills by about 20 percent early next year as an inflation-relief step under a broader economic package that will entail nearly 30 trillion yen (\$204 billion) in government spending, sources familiar with the matter said Wednesday. The size of the package, which is scheduled to be unveiled Friday, will likely exceed 67 trillion yen, including spending by municipal governments and companies, the sources said. The amount of government outlay was raised from 25.1 trillion yen planned earlier amid calls from ruling lawmakers, they said. Higher energy prices are threatening to squeeze household budgets and the government is seeking to reduce utility bills, covering not just electricity but also gas. The existing subsidies for oil wholesales to lower retail gasoline and kerosene prices will be extended beyond December, the sources added, though they will be offered at a reduced amount from June.

If these steps are implemented, an average household would see their expenditure on utilities and gasoline cut by 45,000 yen for the nine months to September. The government plans to tap tax revenue to fund the package, though most funds would have to be secured by issuing government bonds, the sources added. To put a limit on spending, it plans to phase out support for utility bills in September next year, as fiscal restoration is a daunting challenge for Japan whose fiscal health is already the worst among major economies. Based on the new package, the government plans to submit a draft extra budget for the current fiscal year to next March to parliament. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida is scrambling to reverse a recent slump in support ratings by extending additional support to households and companies. Core consumer inflation in Japan is at its highest level in some three decades amid higher fuel costs caused by Russia's war in Ukraine and the yen's rapid depreciation, which has inflated import prices.

One major pillar of the package is lowering household electricity bills by 7 yen per kilowatt-hour, meaning that an average household would save around 2,800 yen a month. Companies will receive support of 3.5 yen per kilowatt-hour. In addition, an average household is expected to save about 900 yen in monthly city gas service charges, with the government providing support of 30 yen per cubic meter of consumption. Kishida has instructed officials to focus on steps to ease the pain of

accelerating inflation and address yen weakness, spur wage growth and rejuvenate the economy. The package will also include handing out 100,000 yen per mother expecting a child as the population is rapidly aging, and promoting the domestic production of grain, fertilizers and livestock feed by extending support, the sources said.

From <https://english.kyodonews.net> 10/26/2022

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SOUTH KOREA: Gov't to Lower Criminal Age Limit by 1 Year to 13

The age of criminal responsibility will be lowered by one year from the current 14, the Ministry of Justice said Wednesday, announcing measures to cope with an increasing number of serious crimes committed by juveniles. The ministry said it will revise the criminal and juvenile laws to lower the criminal age limit to be able to charge youths criminally from the age of 13. Currently, minors under the age of 14 cannot be convicted of a crime in South Korea. If such children commit offenses, they are referred to community service programs or youth correction institutions. Under the soon-to-be revised laws, 13-year-old middle school first or second grade students, for instance, will be subject to criminal punishment if they commit a crime. Justice Minister Han Dong-hoon (R) visits a juvenile correctional facility in Anyang, south of Seoul, on June 22, 2022, in this file photo provided by his ministry.

Justice Minister Han Dong-hoon ordered the launch of a study on the readjustment of the minimum age of criminal liability in June in line with an earlier campaign pledge by President Yoon Suk-yeol to lower the criminal age limit by two years to 12. Yoon issued the pledge amid growing calls for stern measures to deal with ever-increasing serious youth crimes. But the government will consider prohibiting criminal inquiry for crimes committed at the age of 13 in order to minimize possible disadvantages in education and employment for those concerned, the ministry said. The government will also take additional measures to reduce recidivism among juvenile offenders by thoroughly separating them from adult offenders in prison, strengthening their correctional and educational programs and increasing support for employment after release from prison, it added.

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Opposition DP to Table Bill to Revise BAI Act to Prevent Politicized Inspections

The main opposition Democratic Party (DP) said Thursday it will push for a revision of the Board of Audit and Inspection (BAI) Act to prevent politically-motivated inspections. The DP plans to table a revision bill as early as next week. "We have experienced over these past few months the BAI, a constitutional institution, can be abused by power ... We drew up a bill to strengthen the BAI's political neutrality and

independence and improve its impartiality and transparency," Rep. Park Beom-kye said. The bill will require the state auditor to disclose decisions made by its Council of Commissioners and report its internal inspection results to the president and parliament. It also prohibits the auditor from making an interim announcement of an inspection or requesting investigative authority for a probe before getting approval from the council. The carrying out of inspections on ordinary citizens will also be prohibited. The DP has slammed the BAI's recent inspections into cases related to the previous Moon Jae-in administration, including the handling of the death of a South Korean fisheries official at the hands of North Korea in 2020 and the nuclear phase-out policy, claiming they were politically motivated. Park said the DP will also push for a parliamentary investigation into the BAI and the prosecution on charges of abusing power.

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South-East Asia

SINGAPORE: Tightening Monetary Policy for 4th Time so Far in 2022

The Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) on Friday tightened its policy stand by re-centering the mid-point of the Singapore Dollar Nominal Effective Exchange Rate (S\$NEER) policy band up to its prevailing level, leaving the slope and width of the policy band unchanged. This was the fourth time for the MAS to consecutively tighten the monetary policy this year, but the move was not as aggressive as widely expected. The Global Economics and Markets Research team of UOB (United Overseas Bank) said in a report that the majority of market consensus had expected a further rise in the slope of the policy band beforehand. The MAS said in its newly-published Monetary Policy Statement that the policy shift, building on past tightening moves, will further reduce imported inflation and help curb domestic cost pressures. The policy stance will help dampen inflation in the near term and ensure medium-term price stability, providing the basis for sustainable economic growth.

The MAS said that the global economy faces high inflation and lower growth next year. Singapore's GDP growth is projected to come in at 3 to 4 percent in 2022. In 2023, the economy is forecast to grow at a pace that is below the trend, which could cause the current mildly positive output gap to reverse. At the same time, MAS core inflation, which excludes the costs of accommodation and private transport, is expected to remain elevated over the next few quarters, with risks still tilted to the upside. For 2022 as a whole, MAS core inflation is estimated to average around four percent and CPI-All Items inflation around six percent. In 2023, taking into account all factors including the Goods and Services Tax increase, MAS core inflation is estimated to come in at 3.5-4.5 percent on average over the year, and CPI-All Items inflation at 5.5-6.5 percent. The authority added that it will continue to closely monitor

global and domestic economic developments amid heightened uncertainty on both the inflation and growth fronts.

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Singapore Raises National Climate Target to Achieve Net Zero Emissions by 2050

Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister Lawrence Wong announced on Tuesday that the city-state raises its national climate target to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 as part of its Long-Term Low-Emissions Development Strategy. He said at the Singapore International Energy Week (SIEW) 2022 that Singapore will enhance its 2030 Nationally Determined Contributions by aiming to peak its emissions earlier and reduce its emissions to around 60 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent in 2030, which is 5 million tonnes less than the previous commitment of peaking the emissions in 2030 at 65 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent. "This 5 million tonnes improvement is significant," Wong added. "It is equivalent to reducing our current transport emissions by two-thirds." He said that Singapore will submit the enhanced targets to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as parties to the Paris Agreement meet at COP 27 next month, in line with the Glasgow Climate Pact. To achieve net zero emissions, the Singaporean government will need to encourage businesses and individuals to be more energy efficient, reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions and adopt green energy alternatives, said Wong. He said that the government decided that a better approach is not to reduce or hold back the carbon taxes but to provide targeted relief to businesses and consumers so that it has the right price signals for the economy as a whole and the government will extend help to those who need it.

Wong announced earlier this year that Singapore will raise the carbon tax from the current five Singapore dollars per tonne of CO₂ equivalent to about 50-80 dollars by 2030. The carbon tax in Singapore is applied broadly, covering about 80 percent of its emissions today. Besides, Wong said at the SIEW that the Singaporean government will invest more in technologies to help decarbonize the economy. The deputy prime minister also announced at the SIEW the launch of Singapore's National Hydrogen Strategy which will provide a roadmap of how hydrogen can support Singapore's decarbonization efforts, and the steps Singapore will be taking to prepare Singapore for a hydrogen future. This is part of Singapore's international climate commitment to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. "If technology continues to advance, we foresee that hydrogen can supply up to half of our power needs by 2050, alongside domestic renewable energy sources and electricity imports," Wong said. He disclosed that Singaporeans may start to have access to electricity generated from low-carbon hydrogen from 2027, as the country will kickstart its hydrogen efforts by issuing an Expression of Interest for a small-scale commercial project utilizing low-carbon ammonia for power generation.

THAILAND: BOI Frames New 5-Year Investment Promotion Strategy to Pave Way for New Economy

Thailand's Board of Investment (BOI) last week approved the framework of its new investment promotion strategy for the next five years, which will focus on entering the new economy era. The strategy involves encouraging technological advancement, a transition to green and smart Industries, talent development, as well as creativity and innovation, to strengthen the country's status as a regional hub for business, trade and logistics. The new investment promotion strategy (2023-27) aims to promote investment to restructure the country's economy around three core concepts: innovation, technology, and creativity; competitiveness and the ability to adapt quickly; and, inclusiveness, taking into account environmental and social sustainability. "In view of the challenging, volatile and highly competitive global environment, the BOI will stay ahead of changes and keep promoting investment in a way that achieves concrete results, helping to lead Thailand into the new economy," Narit Therdsteeerasukdi told reporters during his first press conference since taking over as secretary-general of the BOI on October 3. "To reach that objective, the BOI will broaden its role from that of a 'promoter' providing tax and non-tax benefits, to focus on becoming an 'integrator' of investment support tools, a 'facilitator' providing services, and a 'connector' linking industries to create more business opportunities."

To implement the strategy and its vision of the new economy, the BOI will articulate its investment promotion policies around seven pillars:

- Upgrade existing industries, in parallel with the building of new industries in which Thailand has high potential, and an overall strengthening of the supply chain
- Acceleration of industrial transition to green and smart industries through investments in automation, digital adoption and decarbonisation
- Promotion of Thailand as a business centre, and an international trade and investment gateway for the region
- Strengthening SMEs and startups, ensuring they are connected to the global market and supply chain
- Promotion of investments in the different regions of Thailand that fits the potential of each area and enables inclusive growth
- Promotion of investments that will promote community and society development
- Promotion of Thailand's overseas investment to expand business opportunities for Thai companies

BOI frames new 5-year investment promotion strategy to pave way for new economy

Further details of the policies and sector-specific incentive packages will be

presented to the board and announced in coming weeks, Narit said. During the first nine months of 2022, foreign and local investors filed with the BOI a total of 1,247 applications for investment promotion, worth a combined 439.1 billion baht (US\$11.6 billion), Narit said. While the number of applications rose 8.5 per cent when compared to the 1,149 projects seen in the first nine months of 2021, the combined value fell 14.1 per cent, from 511 billion baht, reflecting a smaller average project size. Thailand's Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) area saw 376 projects applying for promotion, representing a combined investment value of 246.7 billion baht, or 56 per cent of the total value of applications in the first nine months, Narit said. Most are investments in Rayong and Chonburi provinces. Foreign direct investment (FDI) applications decreased 25 per cent year on year to 275.6 billion baht

The main source of FDI applications in the first nine months was China with 45 billion baht, followed by Taiwan (39.3 billion baht), Japan (37.6 billion baht), the US (34.3 billion baht), and Hong Kong (26.3 billion baht). During the first nine months, FDI applications data for China, Hong Kong and Taiwan all included investments in the manufacturing of new electric vehicles (EV) and parts. Major EV investments announced in Thailand this year involve plants by BYD, whose investment is coming through its Hong Kong-based unit, and Foxconn. Over the nine months to September, the BOI issued promotion certificates to 1,101 projects, an increase of 17 per cent year on year. The combined investment value of the certificates amounted to 357.6 billion baht, an increase of 57 per cent, Narit said. "The promotion certificate statistics, the closest data we have to actual investment, are sending a clear signal that over the next one to two years, there will be a significant increase in actual investment flows," Narit said.

From <https://www.nationthailand.com/> 10/17/2022

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VIETNAM: Industry Calls for Improvement of Petroleum Law Amendment

While the draft amendment to the petroleum law has been well-received by the industry, businesses are calling for solutions to several bottlenecks in the document to improve the law's feasibility and industry operations. Among these concerns is the regulation of the language of the contract. If the chosen contractor is Vietnamese, then the contract will be written in this language, as per Clause 1, Article 34 of the draft amendment, This also means that in the case of a foreign contractor, the contract will be available in a foreign language. However, this could be a barrier in the case when there are multiple stakeholders or when changes need to be made to the document. Nguyễn Minh, head of the legal and trade department of Eni Vietnam, said that foreign investors wanted official contracts to be available in two languages. As there would be only one language in the official contract, its translated version would not have the parties' signatures, which raised concerns for businesses. According to Vương Minh Đức of ExxonMobil Vietnam and Đỗ Ngọc Thanh of Japan

Vietnam Petroleum Company most of the petroleum industry operation is conducted in English. They added that a contract available in English upon signing would be a crucial point in attracting foreign investments. In reality, the petroleum industry in Việt Nam currently uses both English and Vietnamese in their contracts. Therefore, industry insiders consider the change in the draft amendment unnecessary and can become a hindrance in terms of policies and frameworks. The suggestion is that the signing contract should be in a common foreign language, usually English, regardless of the contractor's nationality.

In the case of PetroVietnam and its subsidiaries, conflicting processes stated in the petroleum law and the state budget law in business transfers are being called for revision. As petroleum has different characteristics from other commodities, entrepreneurs say that it is not feasible or fitting to propose competitive sale offers based on an independent assessment of the property's starting price. The reasons presented are that no agency can value this asset and that hiring value appraisers and organising competitive sale offers could lead to national defence and security risks. Regarding the use and management of the state budget in petroleum-related operations, the draft says that the approval decision is fully assigned to PetroVietnam's Board of Members in Article 63; while in Article 66, the Commission for the Management of State Capital at Enterprises (CMSC) only sends reports on PetroVietnam's capital use to the Ministry of Industry and Trade for assessment. The concern is that there are no specific procedures or documents for PetroVietnam's board to make approvals in case of production-sharing contracts or for the CMSC to comment on the capital use of the company in its projects and operations. Furthermore, after receiving the agreement from the state agencies in charge of petroleum and the CMSC, PetroVietnam will also need to follow its approval procedures, which leads to prolonged and overlapping processes. President of Việt Nam Petroleum Association Dr Nguyễn Quốc Thập said that he highly commended the draft amendment to the petroleum law but also hoped that the current bottlenecks would be addressed, responding to the expectations of the Party, state, society and businesses.

From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 10/07/2022

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South Asia

INDIA: UP Approves Electric Vehicles Policy, Aims to Become Global Manufacturing Hub

The Uttar Pradesh government has decided to give a 15 percent subsidy to the people of the State on purchasing of electric vehicles. The decision was taken in the cabinet meeting held yesterday. Accordingly, the rebate will be available on the first 2 lakhs two-wheeler vehicles. Two wheelers buyers can get a subsidy of Rs 5000. Rs 12,000 will be given on the first fifty thousand three-wheelers. And one lakh will be

given as a subsidy on the purchase of the first twenty-five thousand of four-wheelers. The move which is a Diwali bonanza by the state government is aimed at reducing the pollution level in the state. The Uttar Pradesh government has recently approved the Electric Vehicles Policy in the state at the cabinet meeting held on Thursday. The state government not only wants to develop environment-friendly mobility in the state but also aims to make UP a global manufacturing hub for electric vehicles, batteries, and other related components. The recently taken initiative is in line with India's ambitious plan of carbon net neutrality country by 2070. Capitalising on the needs, the Uttar Pradesh government aims to make itself a one trillion dollar economy. With the Electric Vehicles policy put into effect, The state government is planning to attract 30,000 crore in investment and create around 10 lakhs of direct or indirect jobs.

From <https://egov.eletsonline.com> 10/14/2022

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New Education Policy Prepared After Deep Thought & Research, Will Soon Show Results

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar said on Friday, the New Education Policy (NEP) has been prepared with deep thought and research and will show results in the days to come. "The New Education Policy is not a policy of any party or government, but of the entire nation that has been prepared after deep thought and research. It will show results in the coming days," he further said. "Due to this policy, combined with technological development, the students of the country will get ample employment opportunities in any corner of the world," said the VP in a release issued by the state information department. Speaking about the towering memorial to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in the state's Kevadiya area, he said, "When I visited the Statue of Liberty in America 34 years ago, I never dreamt an even bigger statue would be built in India." I feel pride in seeing the wonderful Statue of Unity, Dhankhar said.

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Chhattisgarh Government Gives Nod on Draft Policy for HEIs in PPP Mode

According to officials, the Chhattisgarh government approved the draft of a policy to set up higher educational institutions(HEIs) under public-private partnership (PPP) mode to provide quality education to youth from backward areas on Monday. The decision was taken at a cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel. Quoting a government statement, the official said, "The cabinet has approved the proposed policy draft for setting up higher educational institutions under public-private partnership mode to increase the state's gross admission ratio in the higher education sector and to provide quality education facilities to the youth from backward and extremely backward areas."

From <https://egov.eletsonline.com> 10/18/2022

Arunachal Government Signs MoU with Education Ministry to Establish PM-SHRI Schools

The Union Ministry of Education signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Arunachal Pradesh with a vision to bring a large scale transformation in the segment of school education. The major object is also to establish PM SHRI schools and strengthen the infrastructure of existing school which is managed by the local bodies and state representatives. The Arunachal Chief Minister – Pema Khandu himself wrote on Twitter “The visionary leadership of Hon PM Shri Narendra Modi is taking the education to a new high. Glad that an MoU was signed between DseEduMinistry, EduMinOfIndia and School Education Dept, Govt of Arunachal, to set up PM SHRI Schools in the State, today.”

He further added, “As envisaged under PM SHRI scheme, the existing schools managed by State & local bodies would be strengthened to deliver quality teaching for cognitive development of students. The schools would act as exemplary institutions to offer mentorship to others schools in the vicinity.” These PM SHRI (PM Schools for Rising India) schools will witness the new elements globally applause, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and will act as set an example for future schools. It will offer mentorship to other schools in their vicinity. It aims to deliver quality teaching for cognitive development among students. The centrally sponsored scheme will provide high-quality education in an equitable, inclusive and joyful school environment.

From <https://egov.eletsonline.com> 10/26/2022

Amendments to IT Rules 2021 Notified, Provides for Creation of Grievance Appellate Committee

With the aim to bring in significant changes to the grievance redressal mechanism in the country, the Union government on Friday notified amendments to the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules of 2021. Consequently, it has published the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2022 in the official gazette. The amendment, by way of newly introduced Rule 3A, provides for setting up of Grievance Appellate Committee (Committee). “The Central Government shall, by notification, establish one or more Grievance Appellate Committees within three months from the date of commencement of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2022,” Rule 3A says. As per Rule 3A (2), each Grievance Appellate Committee shall consist of a chairperson and two whole time members appointed by the Central Government, of which one shall be a member ex-officio and two shall be independent members. A

party aggrieved by a decision of the Grievance Officer may prefer an appeal to the Committee within a period of thirty days from the date of receipt of communication from the Grievance Officer.

The Rules also provide that while dealing with appeal, if the Committee feels necessary, it may seek assistance from any person having requisite qualification, experience and expertise in the subject matter. The new amendment further mentions that, Committee shall adopt an online dispute resolution mechanism wherein the entire appeal process, from filing of appeal to the decision would be conducted through digital mode. All the orders passed by the Committee should be complied with by the intermediary concerned and a report to that effect shall be uploaded on its website. The amended Rules also put the responsibility on social media intermediaries to ensure that users comply with due diligence requirements laid down under the IT Rules, 2021.

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Central-West Asia

AZERBAIJAN: Plans to Approve New Normative Acts on Information Security

Two normative acts, one of which is related to the security of a critical information structure, are expected to be approved in Azerbaijan, Head of the State Service for Special Communications and Information Security Ilgar Musayev said at the Global Hybrid War and Cybersecurity summit in Baku, Trend reports. According to Musayev, it's also expected to approve information and cyber security strategy.

From <https://en.trend.az> 10/03/2022

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Azerbaijani Parliament Approves New Agreement on Air Traffic Between Azerbaijan and Israel

The bill on approving the 'Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Government of the State of Israel on air traffic' was submitted for discussion at the plenary session of the Azerbaijani parliament on October 11, Trend reports. The MPs stressed that the new agreement would contribute to improving relations between the two countries. Following the discussion, the document was put up for voting and adopted.

From <https://en.trend.az> 10/11/2022

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Azerbaijan Adopts New Rules on Repo Market

The Baku Stock Exchange (BSE) has adopted rules for determining the Repo subject, as well as for calculating the collateral ratio on Repo transactions, Trend reports referring to the BSE. According to the statement, the BSE developed the "Rules for determining the Repo subject and calculating the collateral ratio on Repo transactions", entering into force on October 18, 2022, in order to improve liquidity and risk management mechanisms on Repo transactions for corporate securities that are the subject of Repo.

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Azerbaijan's Spending on Social Protection Planned to Be Increased in 2023

Spending on social protection in Azerbaijan will be increased in 2023, Trend reports on October 25. This issue was reflected in the draft law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On the state budget of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2023", submitted to the Azerbaijani parliament on October 24. According to the draft law, as in previous years, the state budget for 2023 will be socially oriented. So, 15.2 billion manat (\$8.9 billion) are envisioned to be allocated for these purposes, which is 1.3 billion manat (\$760 million), or 9.3 percent more than in 2022. According to the draft law, the revenues of the state budget of Azerbaijan next year are projected to equal 30.72 billion manat (\$18.07 billion), and expenditures - 33.3 billion manat (\$19.6 billion).

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Draft Law Recommends to Increase Need-Based Minimum Wage in Azerbaijan

The need-based minimum wage is recommended to be increased in Azerbaijan, Trend reports citing draft law "On state budget of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2023". The draft law "On state budget of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2023" was submitted to Azerbaijani Parliament (Milli Majlis) on October 24. The limit of the need-based minimum wage is recommended to be increased by 23 percent compared to 2022 and amount to 246 manat (\$144). For comparisons, in 2022 it was forecast at 200 manat (\$117). According to the draft law, the revenues of the state budget of Azerbaijan for the next year are forecasted at the level of 30.7 billion manat (\$18 billion), and expenditures - 33.3 billion manat (\$19.5 billion).

From <https://en.trend.az> 10/25/2022

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Draft Law on Public-Private Partnership Recommended at Plenary Session of Azerbaijan's Parliament

The discussion of the draft law "On public-private partnership" took place at the meeting of the Azerbaijani Parliament's (Milli Majlis) Committee on Economic Policy, Industry, and Entrepreneurship, Trend reports citing Azerbaijani Parliament. Chairman of the Committee on Economic Policy, Industry and Entrepreneurship of Azerbaijani Parliament (Milli Majlis) Tahir Mirkishili, Minister of Economy of Azerbaijan Mikayil Jabbarov, President of Azerbaijan Bank Association Zakir Nuriyev, members of Parliament participated in the meeting. The new draft law, in accordance with paragraphs 11,12 and 13 of part I of Article 94 of the Constitution of Azerbaijan determines the organizational, legal, and economic foundations for carrying out activities in the field of public-private partnership. After discussion, the bill was recommended to the plenary session of the Azerbaijani Parliament (Milli Majlis) during the first reading.

From <https://en.trend.az> 10/28/2022

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UZBEKISTAN: Unveiling New Measures to Support Dev't of Agriculture Sector

Uzbekistan announced new measures to support the development of the agriculture sector in 2023, Trend reports via the press service of the Uzbek president. The President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev held a meeting on the expected results in the agricultural sector at the end of the year and tasks for the next year. First of all, the issue of increasing productivity through the efficient use of land and water resources was considered. The importance of helping farmers in determining the composition of the soil, choosing seeds, and protecting crops from pests was indicated. The task was set to launch, together with foreign companies, projects for the effective management of water resources in the regions. Furthermore, the need to expand the access of farms to financial resources, to simplify obtaining loans and subsidies was noted. In addition, the president separately touched upon the issue of the digitalization of agriculture. In general, the goal was set to create 600,000 permanent jobs in this sector and increase exports to \$2 billion next year.

From <https://en.trend.az> 10/22/2022

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Oceania

AUSTRALIA: \$5.6 Million for Education, Training and Awareness, as Nation Leading Coercive Control Laws Introduced

The NSW Government today introduced a bill into Parliament to create a standalone criminal offence of coercive control towards current and former intimate partners, backed by \$5.6 million in initial funding for education, training and awareness. Attorney General Mark Speakman said the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Coercive Control) Bill 2022 delivers on the NSW Government's commitment to

support NSW women, victim-survivors of domestic violence and frontline services by outlawing coercive control. “Australians grieved with the loved ones of Hannah Clarke and her children, and Dr Preethi Reddy. Their tragic deaths put the spotlight on this insidious form of violence. But they are not isolated cases and they make it tragically clear why we must take action now,” Mr Speakman said. “Across the nation, recognition of this abusive pattern of behaviour is growing, and our laws must change with it. NSW is taking that step today.

“Coercive control is difficult to identify, difficult to legislate and difficult to prosecute. But these challenges are no excuse for not acting – this is a matter of life and death. “The bill we have introduced today is our best recommendation of the way forward, informed by many years of extensive consultation, research and analysis. It reflects a careful, cautious and measured approach.” Minister for Women Bronnie Taylor said until relatively recently, coercive control was not a well-known phrase. “Coercive control involves patterns of behaviour whereby the perpetrator deliberately isolates victim-survivors from friends, family and support systems, making detection even harder,” Mrs Taylor said. “Today the NSW Government is saying to victim-survivors that we hear you and we support you.”

Treasurer Matt Kean said the important reforms are backed by \$5.6 million in initial funding, which includes \$0.7 million announced in the 2022-23 NSW Budget to support the NSW Government’s commitment to outlaw coercive control in intimate partner settings. “We know that this law is only as strong as its implementation. That’s why today we are announcing a further \$4.9 million to support coercive control training for police, funding for multiple awareness campaigns and educational resources,” Mr Kean said. Minister for Women’s Safety and the Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence Natalie Ward, who chaired the Joint Select Committee on Coercive Control, said lives depend on this important legislative reform. “Criminalising coercive control is crucial to ensuring that we recognise in law a pattern of behaviour that is identified as a red flag for domestic violence deaths,” Mrs Ward said.

“I am so grateful to the many witnesses who courageously provided evidence to the Joint Select Committee on Coercive Control. Their evidence has helped shape an incredibly important piece of legislation that will deter this form of violence.” CEO, Women’s Community Shelters, Annabelle Daniel OAM, said “It’s important that we legislate now, operationalise after a period and review down the track”. The Crimes Legislation Amendment (Coercive Control) Bill 2022 was second read in the Legislative Assembly today, Wednesday 12 October. When passed, NSW will be the first Australian state or territory to have a dedicated offence for coercive control. Once passed, there will be at least a further 14 months, and up to 19 months, before the laws commence, to allow plenty of time for training, resourcing, education and community awareness raising, guided by a multi-disciplinary taskforce. The NSW Government committed an additional \$69.6 million in this year’s Budget for services

that support victim-survivors of domestic and family violence, and minimise the trauma experienced during legal proceedings.

From <https://afndaily.com.au> 10/14/2022

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New Rules to Boost Agritourism

More farmers across NSW will soon be swinging their gates open to visitors, thanks to a new policy that makes it easier to set up agritourism opportunities. Deputy Premier and Minister for Regional NSW Paul Toole today released the Government's final agritourism policy aimed at helping diversified farm businesses thrive. "We're making it cheaper and easier for our farmers to diversify their income by starting, running and growing agritourism experiences, such as farm stays, cafes, cellar doors, retreats, roadside stalls, fruit picking and small wedding venues," Mr Toole said. "Farmers who want to innovate and share a taste of their region with visitors shouldn't be held back by red tape. That's why we've introduced clear definitions and new planning pathways to allow activities that meet the policy to happen with either faster or no planning approval."

Minister for Planning and Minister for Homes Anthony Roberts said the finalised policy will support the growing agritourism industry and encourage the next generation to farm the land. "Agritourism is a growing sector for both the Australian and NSW economies and is expected to be worth \$18.6 billion nationally by 2030. It's important we provide a clear and simple pathway through the planning system," Mr Roberts said. "Our farmers have shown resilience time and time again over the last few years, battling through floods, fires, drought and the COVID-19 pandemic, and we want to support them however we can." Minister for Agriculture Dugald Saunders said the policy encourages locals to boost their revenue and future-proof their farms. "The last few years have been really tough on farmers as they recover from the drought, bushfires, floods and the pandemic. Reforms like these will help landholders build resilience by providing another source of income," Mr Saunders said.

"Whether they're building a small shopfront, hosting events, taking in campers or starting roadside stalls, farmers can choose from a range of opportunities made simpler by this policy change." Minister for Tourism Ben Franklin said there are now endless avenues for primary producers to drive productivity and cash flow on their doorstep. "It's all about using the land in new and innovative ways, complementing existing businesses and giving people more reasons to visit regional areas," Mr Franklin said. "The pandemic has seen NSW residents spend more time exploring our amazing state, and these activities will attract tourists and put rural communities on the map as drawcard destinations." The new policy will commence on 1 December.

From <https://afndaily.com.au> 10/09/2022

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New Laws to Confiscate Proceeds of Crime and Unexplained Wealth

The NSW Government is powering ahead with the State's toughest ever organised crime reforms, today introducing legislation to give police and the NSW Crime Commission new powers to confiscate unexplained wealth and the proceeds of crime. Deputy Premier and Minister for Police Paul Toole said the NSW Government last month introduced world leading legislation targeting two key enablers of organised crime – encrypted devices and money laundering. "Today's Bill completes that package – and will strike organised crime groups at their financial base," Mr Toole said. "These reforms will give law enforcement officers the powers they need to stop criminal gangs profiting from their actions and incapacitate them financially. "If you're living the high life off the proceeds of crime and getting around in flash cars, expect police to come knocking with new powers under warrant to seize your most prized possessions."

The full package of organised crime reforms includes: New powers to confiscate unlawfully acquired assets of major convicted drug traffickers Enhanced powers to target and confiscate unexplained wealth Expanded powers to stop and search for unexplained wealth and more effectively investigate organised crime New money laundering offences for those dealing with and caught trying to disguise the proceeds of general crime A new offence that prohibits the possession of a dedicated encrypted criminal communication device (DECCD) – and orders to target high risk individuals likely to use them New powers to enable police to direct a person to provide access to a digital device, which is akin to gaining the keys to a safe NSW Police Commissioner Karen Webb said this new legislation will support law enforcement in their crackdown of organised criminal networks.

"We welcome these reforms and the significant powers they will give police and the Crime Commission in our fight against organised crime and in the name of keeping our community safe," Commissioner Webb said. "Having the ability to confiscate unexplained wealth will strengthen our ability to severely hinder the lifestyle of organised criminal networks and ultimately allow us to get to the lifeblood of organised crime – money. "We are committed to using every power available to us to infiltrate and disrupt these networks and put those suspected of serious crimes before the courts."

From <https://afndaily.com.au> 10/15/2022

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Coercive Control Bill Passes Lower House

The NSW Government's bill to criminalise coercive control in intimate partner relationships has passed the Lower House today with support across the Chamber.

Attorney General Mark Speakman said the NSW Government's landmark Crimes Legislation Amendment (Coercive Control) Bill 2022 creates a stand-alone offence of coercive control, which will carry a maximum sentence of seven years in jail. "Coercive control is a form of domestic abuse that involves patterns of behaviour that have the cumulative effect of denying victim-survivors their autonomy and independence," Mr Speakman said. "It is a proven precursor to domestic violence deaths. Our community has grieved with the families of too many domestic violence homicide victims. "This bill is about supporting victim-survivors held hostage in their own homes and in their own lives by domestic terrorism," Mr Speakman said.

"It is the product of many years of research, careful consideration and unprecedented consultation in the past two and a half years, including at least seven stages of development such as a discussion paper, a parliamentary inquiry, public exposure draft bill and roundtables. "This bill is our bond, our commitment to taking action against this insidious evil that is coercive and controlling behaviour. "In my second reading speech I called on all members of Parliament to stand with the NSW Government on tackling this insidious crime. I thank members of the Legislative Assembly for their support and for engaging with this reform in such a constructive, positive manner. "The Legislative Assembly has sent a clear message – this reform is important, this reform is urgent and now is the time to act.

"To address feedback from some in the domestic and family violence sector, amendments have been added with unanimous support in the House to put beyond doubt that the implementation taskforce will include NSW Police Force, the chair of the Domestic and Family Violence and Sexual Assault Council and a member from the sector with substantial expertise and experience in domestic and family violence service delivery. "The NSW Government is also pleased to facilitate a further round of consultation on these reforms – the fourth consultation round on the provisions of the bill – to assist the Legislative Council to consider this important reform in November 2022. The Standing Committee on Social Issues will report on the provisions of the bill on 31 October 2022."

Minister for Women's Safety and the Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence Natalie Ward, who chaired the Joint Select Committee on Coercive Control, said the NSW Government's extensive consultation has helped make sure the offence captures only conduct of the very serious standard that deserves criminal sanction and avoids overreach. "This bill reflects a careful, cautious and measured approach to criminalising coercive control," Mrs Ward said. "We thank the many individuals, community members and stakeholders who have been on this journey with the NSW Government to better recognise coercive control and bring to justice those who perpetuate this horrendous, manipulative crime."

From <https://afndaily.com.au> 10/20/2022

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Family Is Culture Bill Passes the Upper House

The NSW Government's Bill to address Aboriginal over-representation in out-of-home care (OOHC) and increase support for children in OOHC and their families has passed the Upper House today. Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Services Natasha Maclaren-Jones said under the Bill there will be a legislative requirement to take active efforts to keep children safely at home with their parents or families when it is possible to do so. "This landmark Legislation will help change the lives of children in OOHC by ensuring everything is done to keep young people with their families or kin," Mrs Maclaren-Jones said. "The NSW Government has sent a clear message – we are committed to taking action against the issue of Aboriginal over-representation in OOHC and we are committed to taking action now.

"The changes will improve provision of culturally appropriate care to Aboriginal children and give Aboriginal families a greater say in decision making and more involvement in court proceedings." The Bill implements 14 FIC recommended amendments from the Family Is Culture Legislative Reforms report. An additional recommendation is being addressed through policy change and more complex recommendations will be subject to further consultations with stakeholders. Other key changes in the Bill include: greater accountability and transparency in the child protection system improved casework and culturally sensitive assessments requirements for the Department of Communities and Justice to provide evidence to the Children's Court of all the steps actively taken by caseworkers to prevent children being removed from their families. The FIC report's legislative reforms were informed and developed in consultation with more than 130 stakeholders.

From <https://afndaily.com.au> 10/22/2022

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NEW ZEALAND: Stronger Terrorism Laws Make Safer

The Government is strengthening counter-terrorism laws to make it harder for people who are known threats to undertake terrorist acts, Justice Minister Kiri Allan has announced. "Following the terror attack in the Lynn Mall supermarket last year, where the individual responsible was known to be a threat to New Zealand's security, Cabinet sought a review on how the control order regime could be strengthened," Kiri Allan said. "The changes we are making will improve the effectiveness of the Control Orders Act, and expand the criteria for high-risk individuals who can be covered by the restrictions, which limit their ability to undertake an attack. "While no law can ever stop a motivated terrorist from undertaking an attack, these changes will go a long way in preventing, disrupting and limiting their ability to do so," Kiri Allan said.

Cabinet has agreed to the following changes to the control orders regime: expand the eligibility criteria for those who can be covered by a control order to include if the

person has received a conviction for objectionable publications that promote torture, extreme violence, or cruelty. This is in addition to the current criteria, which includes a conviction for objectionable publications that promote terrorism; expand the eligibility criteria to include people sentenced to home detention and community-based sentences (currently it is limited to sentences of imprisonment) and allow sentence conditions and control orders to exist concurrently for these offenders, to ensure a consistent approach to risk management; allow for greater judicial discretion when setting control order restrictions, to ensure they can be more closely tailored to risk; provide in more detail requirements of the following kinds: a requirement that the relevant person reside at and remain at a specified address and electronic monitoring requirements; and make name suppression requirements more flexible so that an appropriate balance can be struck between preventing the glorification of terrorism activity and reassuring the public that a known terrorism risk is being appropriately managed.

The Government is also seeking to strengthen the terrorist designations scheme by making it explicit that it covers individuals in prison. “The terrorist designation scheme was initially brought in to stop New Zealanders from providing financial support to overseas terrorist groups in the wake of the September 11 attacks. Now, as the terrorism landscape has evolved, our laws need to also. For the first time since the scheme was introduced we have a situation where a designated terrorist entity is imprisoned,” Kiri Allan said. “Overseas, we have seen examples of how imprisoned terrorists continue to attempt to influence and incite others from behind bars. We are seeking to further reduce any ability for designated entities to be glorified or to support others in carrying out acts of terrorism.

“These changes make it clear we will continue to push back to disrupt any efforts by designated individuals and groups to cause harm in our communities and against anyone who may attempt to support or glorify their horrific acts,” Kiri Allan said. Cabinet will amend the Terrorism Suppression Act so that in the case of a designated person who is imprisoned: no application for revocation of the designation can be made on the grounds that the entity is no longer involved in any way in the carrying out of terrorist acts; expiry of the designation would be paused, and the designation remain in place, while the person is imprisoned; and requiring the Prime Minister to review the designation every three years to determine whether it remains justified. In making this assessment, the Prime Minister must consider relevant information provided by the designated individual.

“These amendments provide appropriate safeguards to ensure the designation scheme is effective in addressing the threat of further terrorist acts,” Kiri Allan said. “The proposed changes to the designation and control order schemes are in line with this Government’s commitment to implementing the recommendations of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on the Christchurch masjidain. “The horrific events of 15 March 2019 and in New Lynn last year serve as a continuous

reminder of the devastating consequences to individuals and communities from any terrorist attack. These are important amendments as we look to keep Aotearoa New Zealand as safe as possible,” Kiri Allan said.

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Better Protections for Emergency Workers Become Law

Assaulting frontline health or emergency services workers will be met with tough new penalties, including up to 14 years in jail, under laws that came into force on Wednesday 19 October 2022. Premier Dominic Perrottet said the new offences will better protect a range of key frontline workers who commit their working lives to keeping our community safe. “These new laws reinforce the NSW Government’s commitment to strengthening frontline services and supporting those who selflessly serve in these critical roles,” Mr Perrottet said. “This includes firefighters, paramedics, hospital medical staff, state emergency service workers, surf life savers and marine rescue volunteers.” Deputy Premier and Minister for Police Paul Toole said the new offences carry the same penalties as existing penalties for assaults on police officers and correctional officers.

“This law sends a clear message that assaults and acts of violence against frontline health and emergency service workers are reprehensible and will not be tolerated,” Mr Toole said. “This law also clarifies and provides consistency in the coverage of existing laws for assaulting, hindering or resisting emergency services workers including police officers and correctional officers.” Minister for Health Brad Hazzard said the new legislation protects all paramedics, medical and security staff in hospitals, as well as pharmacists and their staff. “Every person should be able to feel free and safe in their workplace,” Mr Hazzard said. Attorney General Mark Speakman said this legislation is part of the NSW Government’s response to the NSW Sentencing Council’s report Assaults on Emergency Services Workers. “The NSW Government supports all of the Sentencing Council’s recommendations in full or in principle and in this legislation has gone further in one critical respect,” Mr Speakman said.

“The NSW Government has ensured that firefighters from the NSW Rural Fire Service, Fire and Rescue NSW and the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, pharmacy staff, community health workers and NSW State Emergency Service frontline workers are covered by the new offences, in recognition of the significant work they do for our community.” Minister for Corrections Geoff Lee welcomed the strengthening of provisions for frontline staff in correctional centres. “Under three new aggravated offences, anyone who assaults a corrections officer or youth justice officer during a riot faces harsher penalties under three new aggravated offences introduced in the legislation. The definition of ‘Law enforcement officers’ has been expanded to include staff providing education, health or rehabilitation services to

prison inmates and detainees in youth detention centres,” Mr Lee said.

Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience and Minister for Flood Recovery Steph Cooke said violence and assaults against frontline and emergency services personnel is unacceptable. “Whatever the emergency, our frontline workers, especially our volunteers, give their all to help people through the worst of times. They deserve our gratitude and respect, and they also need to know we have their backs,” Ms Cooke said. “These laws ensure that those who perpetuate disgraceful acts of violence on our dedicated emergency services personnel face the appropriate consequences.” The new offences range from up to 12 months in prison and/or a \$2,200 fine, to a maximum 14 years’ jail for the worst offenders.

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Government Action Helps More People Move Off Main Benefit

September Quarter Benefit statistics released today show the number of people receiving a Main Benefit continues to fall year-on-year. “Our Government have been relentless and deliberate in supporting more people into meaningful employment, education and training,” Minister for Social Development and Employment Carmel Sepuloni said. There are now 13,731 fewer people on a Main Benefit compared to September 2021 and the number of people receiving Jobseeker Work Ready Benefit also continues to fall. There are now 98,934 people receiving Jobseeker Work Ready, the first time numbers have dipped below 100,000 since April 2020. “Our strong response to COVID-19 and our economic plan continues to pay dividends, in what continues to be an extremely challenging global environment. That hasn’t diminished our resolve or focus which is reflected by the fact that Benefit numbers have not met the high forecasts from Treasury who predicted 487,500 people would be receiving a Main Benefit by January 2021.

“The September quarter traditionally sees a seasonal rise in Benefit numbers, so to see Jobseeker Work Ready buck the trend shows we are on the right path, with 13 percent less people on Jobseeker Work Ready for over ten years when compared to September 2021,” Carmel Sepuloni said. As at the end of September, 11.1 percent of working age New Zealanders are receiving a Main Benefit, this is two and a half years on from the beginning of the pandemic and compares to 12.6 percent in the same period after the Global Financial Crisis. “Traditionally the September quarter sees a slowdown in the number of people moving into work, however we saw 21,240 people move off a benefit into work during the September quarter. This is around 3,900 more than the same quarter pre-pandemic, showing our investment in front line case management is working. “With more people moving off benefit and into work, unemployment at a near record low of 3.3 per cent, and incomes growing at a higher rate since records began, it’s clear that while there’s more work to be done, our plan is working,” Carmel Sepuloni said.

Stage Set for Government's Landmark Energy Strategy

The Government has published the terms of reference for its landmark New Zealand Energy Strategy, setting out the ambitions and next steps for transitioning the energy system to a high performing, low emissions future, says the Minister of Energy and Resources Megan Woods. "In 2020, emissions from energy made up 40% of our total gross emissions. We will need to do things differently if we are to create a sustainable energy system for generations to come," said Megan Woods. "The New Zealand Energy Strategy will tie together the comprehensive programme of work already underway. Today is about building on this multi-step plan with the Terms of Reference outlining further detail to explain the strategic direction of our move away from polluting and expensive fossil fuels, and preparing us for a renewable future.

"Thanks to our strong economic management and our readiness to do things differently we are well positioned to slash our energy emissions and create a sustainable energy system for generations to come. We must keep our economy secure against what the global downturn and climate change may throw at us," said Megan Woods. The Energy Strategy was one of the main recommendations from the Climate Change Commission's advice Ināia tonu nei: a low emissions future for Aotearoa, and was committed to in the Government's Emissions Reduction Plan (ERP) released in May. It will be developed over the next two years, with the final strategy due in December 2024.

"Planning for future energy shocks and strengthening our economic position within a greening global economy, means we need a strong evidence-base and to chart the path for a future proofed energy system. This is not a Government that sits idly by or seeks to turn back time. Today is a day for celebration as we get closer to our ambitious goals," Megan Woods said. The Government has set a target that 50% of total energy consumption will come from renewable sources by 2035.

Progress Continues on Homelessness Action Plan

The latest progress report for the Aotearoa New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan shows milestones continue to be met as the Government works hard to address homelessness. This is the fifth progress report on the plan which first launched in February 2020. "The last six months has seen solid progress against the 18 actions outlined in the plan. By agencies working collectively with communities, Māori, iwi and housing providers, we've been able to support more New Zealanders out of homelessness," said Associate Minister of Housing (Homelessness), Marama

Davidson. “One of the milestones I’m really proud of is the contracting of over 2200 sustaining tenancy places which will help individuals, families and whānau who may be at risk of losing their tenancies.

“By putting people’s needs at the centre of our mahi we’ve been able to support people in private or public housing that could be struggling to pay rent, dealing with mental or physical health issues or risk factors such as addiction or family violence. “Communities and their commitment on the ground has been absolutely vital to the progress we’re seeing through the HAP. I’m thrilled we’ve recently been able to provide close to \$6 million to local initiatives that will have a strong focus on supporting Māori, Pasefika and rangatahi who may be homeless or at risk of homelessness. “Homelessness should never be inevitable. By working collectively on prevention approaches and providing wrap-around support when people most need it, we can help put an end to homelessness in our communities.”

The following milestones for the Homelessness Action Plan have been met in the six months from February-August 2022 (cumulative figures since February 2020): Pilots in Auckland and Waikato to support people leaving acute mental health and addiction inpatient units 2,202 Sustaining Tenancies places contracted as at end August to help individuals, families and whānau keep their places to live 918 individuals and whānau engaged with the Rapid Rehousing pilot, with 311 individuals and whānau transitioned into permanent housing. 99 places delivered to support rangatahi youth leaving Oranga Tamariki care Close to \$6 million allocated to local work and projects that respond to and prevent homelessness in round two of the local innovation partnership fund. 12 regions with dedicated housing broker services.

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Asia-Pacific

World Bank Makes Appointments Under the Indus Waters Treaty

In line with its responsibilities under the Indus Waters Treaty, the World Bank has made the appointments that it was mandated to make in the two separate processes requested by India and Pakistan in relation to the Kishenganga and Ratle hydroelectric power plants. The two countries disagree over whether the technical design features of these two hydroelectric plants contravene the Treaty. Pakistan asked the World Bank to facilitate the establishment of a Court of Arbitration to consider its concerns about the designs of the two hydroelectric power projects, while India asked for the appointment of a Neutral Expert to consider similar concerns over the two projects. Mr. Michel Lino has been appointed as the Neutral

Expert and Prof. Sean Murphy has been appointed as Chairman of the Court of Arbitration. They will carry out their duties in their individual capacity as subject matter experts and independently of any other appointments they may currently hold. The World Bank continues to share the concerns of the parties that carrying out the two processes concurrently poses practical and legal challenges. The World Bank is confident that the highly qualified experts appointed as Neutral Expert and as members of the Court of Arbitration will engage in fair and careful consideration of their jurisdictional mandate, as they are empowered to do by the Treaty.

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East Asia

CHINA: Keeping Promoting Building of Human Community with Shared Future

Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, on Sunday expressed China's commitment to further promoting the building of a human community with a shared future. "We will work with peoples of all other countries to champion humanity's shared values of peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy, and freedom to safeguard global peace and promote global development, and keep promoting the building of a human community with a shared future," Xi said when meeting the press at the Great Hall of the People. Stressing that the world is grappling with unprecedented challenges, Xi said the CPC has consistently called on the people of the world to grasp and shape the future and destiny of humanity. "When all countries pursue the cause of common good, we can live in harmony, engage in cooperation for mutual benefit and join hands to create a brighter future for the world," he added.

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China's Top Legislature Starts Standing Committee Session

The Standing Committee of the 13th National People's Congress (NPC), China's top legislature, started its 37th session in Beijing on Wednesday. Li Zhanshu, chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, presided over the session's first plenary meeting and delivered a speech. The agenda of the session's first plenary meeting was to study and implement the guiding principles of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC). Li Shulei, member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and head of the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee, delivered a report at the meeting. Li Zhanshu urged efforts to maintain a high degree of unity with the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core ideologically, politically and in action, and to gain an in-depth understanding of the major political outcomes achieved by the 20th CPC National Congress. Efforts

should be made to fully grasp the Party's central tasks on the new journey in the new era and ensure the sound implementation of the guiding principles of the 20th CPC National Congress, said Li Zhanshu. He also called for efforts to uphold the exercise of law-based governance on all fronts, develop whole-process people's democracy, and give better play to the important role of the system of people's congress in state governance.

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Chinese Anti-graft Chief Stresses Study of Party Congress Guiding Principles

Li Xi, member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) of the CPC, on Wednesday stressed making great efforts to study and implement the guiding principles of the 20th CPC National Congress and to firmly exercise full and rigorous Party self-governance. Disciplinary inspection and supervision agencies should fully implement Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, said Li. He issued the instructions when addressing the first meeting of the Standing Committee of the 20th CPC CCDI and a meeting of the CPC CCDI and the National Commission of Supervision (NCS) to convey and study the guiding principles of the 20th CPC National Congress.

It will be the primary political task for the present and for some time to come for the whole Party to study, publicize and implement the guiding principles of the 20th CPC National Congress, he said. The CCDI, NCS and disciplinary inspection and supervision agencies of all levels should equip themselves with a better understanding of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, he said. Li asked disciplinary inspection and supervision agencies to firmly safeguard the authority of the CPC Central Committee and its centralized, unified leadership, take coordinated steps to see that officials do not have the audacity, opportunity or desire to become corrupt, and win the tough and protracted battle against corruption. He also told them to conduct concrete, targeted and regular political oversight so as to ensure that the strategic plans made at the 20th CPC National Congress will be implemented.

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China Mulls Improving System for Recording, Review of Normative Documents

Chinese lawmakers are deliberating a draft amendment to China's Legislation Law to

improve the system for the recording and review of normative documents. The draft amendment was submitted to lawmakers at the ongoing session of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), the top legislature, on Thursday. The draft stipulated that special committees of the NPC and working offices of the NPC Standing Committee shall proactively review the administrative regulations, local regulations, autonomous regulations, and separate regulations that are reported for the record; and when necessary, may conduct a targeted review on the normative documents mentioned above. The recording and review organs under the state council shall proactively review the local regulations, autonomous regulations, separate regulations, ministerial rules, and rules formulated by provincial-level governments that are reported for the record, as read in the draft. The draft also added provisions for establishing and refining a coordinating mechanism for the recording and review of normative documents.

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Xi Stresses Striving in Unity to Fulfill Goals Set by Party Congress

Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, on Thursday stressed promoting the great founding spirit of the Party and the spirit of Yan'an, and striving in unity to fulfill the goals and tasks set by the 20th CPC National Congress. Xi, also Chinese president and chairman of the Central Military Commission, led Li Qiang, Zhao Leji, Wang Huning, Cai Qi, Ding Xuexiang and Li Xi, members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, in a trip to Yan'an, an old revolutionary base in northwest China's Shaanxi Province. The first stop for Xi and the other leaders on Thursday was the site of the Seventh National Congress of the CPC. The congress held in 1945 is of milestone significance in the history of the CPC, marking the Party's becoming more mature politically, ideologically and in terms of its organization, Xi said.

Politically, the entire Party was united under the banner of Mao Zedong, and ideologically, the guiding role of Mao Zedong Thought for the whole Party was established and Mao Zedong Thought was incorporated into the Party Constitution, Xi said. Their next stop was former residences of Mao Zedong and other revolutionaries of the older generation. Comparing the revolutionary sites in Yan'an to a book worth reading forever, Xi said that they served as witnesses to the glorious journey of the Party in leading the Chinese revolution and exploring ways to adapt Marxism to the Chinese context and the needs of the times during the Yan'an period. A guide gave an introduction about how the well-known revolutionary song "The East is Red" was written and became popular. Such songs extolling the Party and Chairman Mao were all created by the people spontaneously, which showed clearly that the people chose Mao Zedong and he enjoyed their support, Xi said.

Thereafter, Xi and the other leaders arrived by vehicle at the Yan'an Revolutionary Memorial Hall to visit an exhibition on the 13 years of the CPC Central Committee in Yan'an. From 1935 to 1948, the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region, of which Yan'an was the center, was the seat of the CPC Central Committee. It served as the center of political guidance in the Chinese People's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, and the general rear area of the Chinese people's struggle for liberation. In an important speech delivered after visiting the exhibition, Xi hailed Yan'an as a holy site of the Chinese revolution and the cradle of New China. He noted that it was in Yan'an that the Party's Central Committee and veteran revolutionaries, including Mao Zedong, led China's revolutionary cause from a low point into an upsurge, reached a historical turning point, and transformed the prospects of the country.

Xi said he lived and worked in Yan'an for seven years, and his father also had worked in Yan'an. The spirit of Yan'an highlights the firm belief in the correct political orientation, the guiding principles of freeing the mind and seeking truth from facts, the fundamental purpose of serving the people wholeheartedly and the enterprising spirit of self-reliance and hard work, Xi said. The spirit, and the glorious traditions and fine conduct developed and promoted during the Yan'an period, are all precious assets of the Party, and should be passed down from generation to generation, Xi stressed. He called on all members of the Party to promote the fighting spirit, strengthen the fighting capacity, resolutely overcome various difficulties and challenges ahead, and harness the indomitable fighting spirit to open up new horizons for the cause of the Party and the country.

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Xi Jinping Stresses Comprehensively Studying, Understanding and Implementing Spirit of 20th CPC National Congress

The first group study session of the Political Bureau of the 20th Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee was held on the afternoon of October 25, focusing on the study and implementation of the spirit of the 20th CPC National Congress. Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, presided over the session. He stressed that the 20th CPC National Congress has made great achievements in politics, theories and practical work, and has laid out major policies and strategic plans for advancing the cause of the Party and the country in the new era. It serves as a political declaration and a program of action to build a modern socialist country in all respects and advance the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation on all fronts. The whole Party must work hard to fully study, understand and implement to the letter the objectives and tasks set forth at the Party's 20th National Congress, and strive for new successes in building a modern socialist country in all respects.

Li Qiang, Zhao Leji, Wang Huning, Cai Qi, Ding Xuexiang, and Li Xi shared their

thoughts on fully understanding and implementing the spirit of the Party's 20th National Congress. According to them, the congress held high the great banner of socialism with Chinese characteristics, stayed committed to Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, the Theory of Three Represents, and the Scientific Outlook on Development, and fully implemented Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. It expounded the great changes in the first decade of the new era and their milestone significance, the worldview and methodology of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era and its stances, viewpoints and methods, the missions and tasks of the CPC on the new journey in the new era, and the Chinese features, essential requirements and major principles that must be firmly grasped in the pursuit of Chinese modernization.

It set China's overall development objectives for the year 2035 and main objectives and tasks for the next five years, and made plans for strengthening the Party's overall leadership and promoting the great new project of Party building in the new era. It charted the way forward and provided us with fundamental guidance for advancing the cause of the Party and the country in the new era. We must resolutely uphold General Secretary Xi Jinping's core position on the Party Central Committee and in the Party as a whole and safeguard the authority of the Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core, and its centralized, unified leadership. We must develop a deep understanding of the decisive significance of establishing Comrade Xi Jinping's core position on the Party Central Committee and in the Party as a whole and establishing the guiding role of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.

We must firmly keep in mind the country's most fundamental interests and enhance our consciousness of the need to maintain political integrity, think in big-picture terms, follow the leadership core, and keep in alignment with the central Party leadership. We must stay confident in the path, theory, system and culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and uphold Comrade Xi Jinping's core position on the Party Central Committee and in the Party as a whole and uphold the Party Central Committee's authority and its centralized, unified leadership. We must remain inspired and adopt a pragmatic work style when implementing the spirit of the Party's 20th National Congress and endeavor to break new ground in the cause of the Party and the country on the new journey ahead. Members of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee attentively heard their opinions.

Xi pointed out in his speech that to study, publicize and implement the spirit of the Party's 20th National Congress is a top political task for the entire Party and the whole country at present and for some time to come. The Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee should take the lead and set an example in this regard and endeavor to make the spirit of the congress deeply and widely understood and grasped by officials and the general public. Xi emphasized that to study and

implement the spirit of the Party's 20th National Congress, we need to focus our efforts on study in a comprehensive manner. Only through comprehensive, systematic and thorough study can we have an overall, accurate and complete understanding of the spirit of the congress and clearly know about our tasks, goals and the ways to accomplish them, thus laying a solid foundation for the full implementation of the spirit. First and foremost, we need to read the original piece and comprehend its essence.

Officials should thoroughly study not only the report to the 20th CPC National Congress itself, but also a series of speeches and documents related to the congress. The spirit of the reports to 18th CPC National Congress and the 19th CPC National Congress should continue to be studied so as to make the study a coherent whole. Innovation in the Party's theories and practices has been quite dynamic and lively since we entered the new era. Our study should also be like that and help us to achieve more than just memorizing some concepts or expressions. We need to associate our study with the historic achievements and historic changes in the cause of the Party and the country we have realized since the Party's 18th National Congress, with the momentous and extraordinary course we have experienced over the recent years, with our actual practice in deepening reform and opening up, promoting high-quality development and effectively responding to the immense risks and challenges, and with the profound changes in the global landscape, so that we can gain a sound understanding of the historical, theoretical and practical logic behind the major principles, policies and strategic plans for the development of the cause of the Party and the country set at the Party's 20th National Congress.

Xi noted that to study and implement the spirit of the Party's 20th National Congress, we need to concentrate more on gaining a comprehensive command of it. The spirit of the congress is rich in content, containing both political foresight and theoretical insight. It also includes well-conceived goals and strategic arrangements for work. All of these are interconnected and integral to one another. Only by combining the history with reality, theory with practice, and international landscape with domestic situation, as well as through multiple times of reflection to chew over both each of its aspects and the issue as a whole, can we gain a comprehensive understanding of the spirit of the congress, or our understanding will be otherwise one-sided or on the surface only.

We need to gain a comprehensive command of the worldview and methodology of the Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era as well as its stances, viewpoints and methods, obtain an in-depth comprehension of integrating the basic tenets of Marxism with China's specific realities and fine traditional culture, and the requirements of putting the people first, maintaining self-confidence and standing on our own feet, upholding fundamental principles and breaking new ground, adopting a problem-oriented approach, applying systems thinking and maintaining a global vision, and have a sound command of the essence of the

Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. We need to have a comprehensive understanding of the profound meaning and significance of the great changes over the past 10 years of the new era, develop a deep perception of the profound implication of such changes for our Party, the Chinese people, socialist modernization and the development of scientific socialism in 21st-century China.

We need to gain an in-depth comprehension of the necessity of unwaveringly adhering to the Party's new theories for the new era, as well as its strategic plans and measures, and maintaining strategic confidence on the new journey in the new era. We should comprehensively understand the distinctive Chinese features of the Chinese path to modernization, its essential requirements and its major principles we must firmly adhere to, and gain a profound cognition of the relation between the theory of Chinese modernization and the strategic plans for building a modern socialist country in all respects, with sound knowledge that the former is the theoretical support for the latter, so that we can understand that the strategic plans for building a modern socialist country in all respects are a well-conceived and necessary choice.

We should have a comprehensive grasp of all strategic plans rolled out at the 20th CPC National Congress, and by taking into consideration the new strategic opportunities, tasks, stages, requirements and environment our country is facing in pursuing development, we should gain a deep understanding of the toughness and complexity of realizing the objectives and tasks ahead for building a modern socialist country in all respects so as to be more conscious and determined in implementing these strategic plans. Xi stressed that, to study and implement the spirit of the Party's 20th National Congress, we need to focus on comprehensive implementation. Empty talk will do nothing for our country; only solid work will make it flourish. No matter how good a plan is, implementation makes the difference. All plans and arrangements, no matter how brilliant they are, will be castles in the air unless a good job is done in implementation.

We should implement the spirit of the Party's 20th National Congress in a well-planned way. Under the guidance of general objectives, general direction and general requirements, we should specify every objective and task to work out targeted action plans with clear timetables and roadmaps to forge ahead in a down-to-earth manner. Members of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee should take the lead in taking concrete and immediate actions to make arrangements for studying and implementing the spirit of the Party's 20th National Congress in areas or places in their portfolio. Decisions and plans made by the Party's 20th National Congress cover every aspect including reform, development and stability, domestic and foreign affairs and national defense, as well as the governance of the Party, the country and the military.

All relevant parties and departments of the National People's Congress, the State

Council, the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and the Central Military Commission should make implementation plans and put forward clear requirements to ensure not only progress but also quality of their work in implementation. The Party's 20th National Congress laid out short-term, medium-term and long-term objectives and tasks. Hence, we should set priorities to comprehensively forge ahead in the whole while focusing on the key areas at the same time, and to take account of immediate tasks while having a vision for long-term objectives and tasks. We should make more efforts to strengthen foundations and do things for long-term benefits, and prevent pointless formalities as well as bureaucratism. All regions and departments must, in light of their respective conditions, turn the strategic plans laid out by the Party Central Committee into their work tasks.

Bearing in mind the overall situation of the country, they must plan and carry out their work with implementing the decisions and plans set out by the Party Central Committee as a prerequisite, and do their work in a creative manner, so as not only to add glory to their own locality, but also make contribution to the overall development of the nation. Xi noted, members of the Political Bureau must take the lead in upholding the Party Central Committee's authority and its centralized, unified leadership, and in implementing the policies and plans of the Party Central Committee. They should take into account the whole picture of the country so that they can show concern for work in other departments, and strengthen coordination and cooperation while performing their own duties and doing a good job in work in their portfolio. They must carry forward fighting spirit, strengthen their capacity to grapple with tough challenges, redouble their efforts to enhance the ability to prevent risks, rise to challenges, and withstand pressure.

They must confront various risks and challenges with courage, and be brave to overcome various difficulties, so as to unswervingly implement the decisions and plans of the Party Central Committee. Xi noted, the Party Central Committee will lay out arrangements to study, publicize and implement the spirit of the 20th CPC National Congress. Relevant authorities must formulate detailed measures to disseminate the spirit of the congress in government departments, enterprises, public institutions, communities in urban and rural areas, schools, military units, various new types of economic and social organizations as well as online platforms. Party schools and academies of governance at all levels must make studying and implementing the spirit of the 20th CPC National Congress the main content of their training programs for officials.

Authorities of all localities and all sectors should lose no time in organizing training of officials in rotation. Leading officials at all levels must act on their own initiative, be both a pragmatic doer and a publicist, and set a good example in publicizing the spirit of the congress. The departments of publicity and theoretical work must make arrangements in a well-organized and coordinated manner, improve publicity and

theoretical work, and intensify publicity to the world so as to help the international community have a comprehensive understanding of the major principles, policies and development strategies of the Party and the country.

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Chinese Procuratorial Organs Ramp Up Protection of Minors

Procuratorial organs in China have enhanced the protection of minors with all-out efforts in recent years, a report from China's top procuratorate showed. The report was submitted by the Supreme People's Procuratorate (SPP) Friday to the 37th session of the Standing Committee of the 13th National People's Congress for deliberation. Of all those who were indicted for crimes against minors from 2018 to September 2022, 42 percent, or 47,000 were sentenced to at least three years in prison in the first instance, said Zhang Jun, procurator-general of the SPP, in the report. Regarding safety issues on campus, procuratorial organs in China worked closely with educational authorities and schools in improving campus safety, the report noted. In 2021, 1,062 people involved in school violence and bullying criminal cases were indicted, down 76.9 percent from 2018.

The report pointed out that comprehensive protection of minors can only be realized when protection in six aspects is in place. The six aspects are judicial protection, and protection from family, school, society, cyberspace and the government. To ensure that protection in these areas is effective, procuratorial organs have taken multiple measures, such as developing mechanisms to rectify irresponsible parent behavior, having procurators participate in school education to raise minors' legal awareness, urging lodging service providers to enhance protection of minors, and creating a clean cyberspace for underage users.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 10/28/2022

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Senior Chinese Official Stresses Promoting Party Congress Guiding Principles

Li Shulei, a senior Communist Party of China (CPC) official, Friday called for full strength to study, publicize, and implement the guiding principles of the 20th CPC National Congress. People working in publicity and ideological departments should fully implement Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, said Li, a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and head of the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee, at a meeting held here. He urged them to acquire a deep understanding of the decisive significance of the establishment of both Comrade Xi Jinping's core position on the CPC Central Committee and in the Party as a whole and the guiding role of Xi

Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. They should align their thoughts and actions with the guiding principles of the 20th CPC National Congress and pool their wisdom and strength in fulfilling the objectives and tasks set by the congress, he said.

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Xi Jinping Stresses Advancing Rural Revitalization Across the Board, Urges Ceaseless Efforts to Modernize Agriculture and Rural Areas During Inspection Tours to Shaanxi's Yan'an, Henan's Anyang

The most challenging and arduous tasks we face in building a modern socialist China in all respects remain in rural areas, stressed Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, during his recent inspection tours to Shaanxi Province's Yan'an city and Henan Province's Anyang city. Xi, also Chinese president and chairman of the Central Military Commission, urged solid steps to comprehensively study and implement the spirit of the 20th CPC National Congress and continue prioritizing the development of agriculture and rural areas. The Yan'an Spirit and the Hongqi Canal Spirit should be carried forward, and our achievements in poverty alleviation be consolidated and expanded, said Xi. He also called for efforts to advance rural revitalization across the board and ceaselessly strive for the modernization of agriculture and rural areas. Ding Xuexiang, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and director of the General Office of the CPC Central Committee, accompanied Xi on the visits.

The visits lasted from Wednesday to Friday. Xi visited the rural area and a school in Yan'an city with the company of Liu Guozhong, a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and secretary of the CPC Shaanxi Provincial Committee, and Zhao Yide, governor of Shaanxi province. He visited Anyang city, where he inspected a revolutionary education base and a cultural relics protection unit, accompanied by Lou Yangsheng, secretary of the CPC Henan Provincial Committee, and Wang Kai, governor of Henan. An old revolutionary base, Yan'an used to suffer entrenched poverty. Xi has been concerned about folks in northern Shaanxi. In February 2015, Xi presided over a seminar on eliminating poverty for a better life in the old revolutionary bases of the provinces of Shaanxi and Gansu, and Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. He delivered an important speech that charted the course for the critical battle against poverty in these regions.

Yan'an was Xi's first destination for his inspection tour after the conclusion of the 20th CPC National Congress. He wished to see how the folks were doing after being lifted out of poverty and learn about the difficulties they were facing and their views on rural revitalization. On the afternoon of Wednesday, Xi traveled to the Nangou village

of Gaoqiao town, Ansai district of Yan'an city as soon as he got off the train. An apple orchard in the mountain was embracing a bumper harvest. Xi walked into the orchard and chatted with growers who were picking apples. He asked about this year's harvest and picked a big red apple. He also learned about apple-growing technique, picking method, apple variety and quality, sale price, villagers' income as well as how to further promote apple-growing and other industries. Xi showed great concern for irrigation and water use. Local villagers told him that they had effectively solved the problem by building dams, as well as adopting drip irrigation and fine management.

Xi recognized their efforts, saying, "This is exactly agricultural modernization. And you have found the right path to industrial development." At an apple washing and selecting workshop, Xi was briefed on the development of the local apple industry and checked the production line for sorting and packaging apples. A variety of locally-grown apples and deep-processed products were on display. He looked at them with great interest and listened to the briefing carefully. Xi affirmed what the locals have done in developing modern agriculture and rural tourism, cultivating and boosting the collective economy, which has helped villagers increase their incomes and become well-off. Outside the workshop, villagers gathered to greet Xi in a loud voice. Xi chatted with them and recalled the years he spent as an educated youth in northern Shaanxi. He said to them, "I once lived in northern Shaanxi for seven years.

During that time, when I saw people were leading a hard life, I thought about what could be done to make their lives better. This time, when I came, I saw a bumper harvest, well-improved traffic conditions as well as other fundamental changes." In the past, villagers in northern Shaanxi had to reclaim terraces and plant crops, having their feet firmly planted in the soil. Carrying hoes into the field and farming all day long, they lived a tough life with their work hardly paying off. Now, with the efforts to convert farmland on the mountains to forest, apple trees have been planted on the hillsides. Villagers have work to do with stable income, children enjoy good education and the elderly benefit from medical insurance -- their lives are getting better day by day. The achievements made in northern Shaanxi are a vivid epitome of the great changes taking place in China, Xi said, pointing out that China has achieved the First Centenary Goal of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, the problem of absolute poverty has been solved and the villagers now enjoy good living conditions, but we should continue to work hard and make our lives even better.

The climate, sunlight, latitude, altitude and other factors in northern Shaanxi shape it into a suitable place for developing the apple industry. Besides, equipped with advanced technologies such as drip irrigation, dwarf planting, and production lines for sorting fruits, apples can be sold out locally with a vast market awaiting. Shaanxi embraces the favorable timing, geographical and human conditions to vigorously develop the apple industry, which is the perfect, most suitable and promising industry for the region, he said. Xi stressed, the CPC is a Party of the people and for the people. As the ruling Party, the CPC is committed to serving the people and doing a

good job for their benefit. Empty talk will do nothing for our country; only solid work will make it flourish. We must gain a full understanding of and apply the spirit of the 20th CPC National Congress, advance rural revitalization across the board, implement one policy after another for the prosperity of the people, speed up the modernization of agriculture and rural areas, so that all the country folks could live a more prosperous life. Xi's remarks won thunderous applause from the villagers.

After that, Xi traveled to Zaoyuan campus of Yan'an Middle School, which was the first school of its kind set up by the CPC. With great care and attention of revolutionaries of the older generation, educationists, and leaders of the Party and the country, Yan'an Middle School has a glorious history as well as fine revolutionary traditions and has fostered many talents for the old revolutionary base areas. Xi walked into the school's education history museum to learn more about how the school is run and operated. He expressed his hope that the school should follow the Yan'an Spirit in imparting knowledge and educating students, deliver an education that the people are satisfied with, and carry forward the fine revolutionary traditions and cultivate talents of the new era. A variety of tasty dishes were on offer at the student dining hall. Xi checked on the dishes and asked the cooks about the prices and flavors, urging them to ensure food quality and pay special attention to food hygiene, so as to provide safe and delicious meals for the students.

The students were having classes at the teaching building. Xi stepped into the classroom of Class 2, Grade 10, where he had a cordial conversation with the teacher and students. He asked the students about their ideals and what they want to become after growing up. One of the students told Xi that she wanted to be a doctor like Li Shizhen, the renowned Ming Dynasty herbalist. A student said he wanted to study pharmacy at university in the future, another student said she would like to learn foreign languages and become an interpreter for diplomatic affairs. Xi was very delighted to hear their answers and praised them as having clear life goals and lofty aspirations. He encouraged the students to establish great ideals at an early age, aspire to become capable young people of a new generation who will contribute to the development of socialism and carry forward the socialist cause, so that our revolutionary traditions and heritage can be passed down from generation to generation.

Night fell as the leaders were leaving. All students went out of their classrooms, clapping hands to see the general secretary off. Xi also waved to bid farewell to them. On the morning of Friday, Xi arrived at the Memorial Hall of the Hongqi Canal in the city of Linzhou in Anyang, Henan Province. In the 1960s, the local people, in order to deal with the severely harsh local environment where they lived completely at the mercy of the scanty rainfall, built the water conservancy project on the mountainside of Taihang with the support of the Party and the government. The project, which diverts water from the Zhanghe River to the area, is called a "man-made river from Heaven." Xi walked into the exhibition hall and watched different parts of the

exhibition -- "Millennial Struggles against the Drought," "Creating Miracles under the Leading of the Red Flag," "Heroic People and Taihang Mountain Monument," "Grand Changes and Realizing Dreams," and "The Eternal Spirit and Marching into the Future" -- one by one.

Xi noted that the Hongqi Canal is a monument inscribing the heroic spirit of the unyielding and valiant local people who dare to fight to change their fate. We need to educate people, especially the youths, with the Hongqi Canal Spirit that China's socialism is won by hard work, struggles and even sacrifice of lives. This was not only true in the past but also true in the new era. Without the arduous work of the older generation, or without the blood and even lives they devoted, there would be no happy life today. We must always remember them. Today, our material life has been greatly improved, but the spirit of perseverance like "the bullheaded old man removing the mountain" and the hard-working style must not change. The Hongqi Canal is of so much educational significance that everyone should come to have a look. Then, Xi inspected the operation of the canal's water diversion sluice gate on the site and learned about the functions of the sluice gate in water diversion, irrigation and environmental improvement.

During the construction of the Hongqi Canal, 300 youngsters formed a commando team, and, with 17 months of hard fighting, they tunneled through the hard rock on the dangerous terrains for a stretch of the canal. The tunnel they made was named "The Youth Tunnel." Xi walked up the steps and came to "The Youth Tunnel," inspecting the canal along the way. He stressed that the Hongqi Canal Spirit and the Yan'an Spirit are coherent and come in continuity, and both are indelible historical memories of the Chinese nation, always stirring people's soul. He said the younger generation must carry forward the spirit of staying tough and diligent, self-reliant and hard-working, abandon the finicky lifestyle and complacent attitude, and, like our parents' generation, leave a memorable legacy in history with their youthful enthusiasm. The onus is on our generations to realize the Second Centenary Goal, Xi said. We are living in a remarkable time and must make our own contributions so as to live up to people's expectations. The Hongqi Canal Spirit will never perish!

On the afternoon of Friday, Xi made an inspection tour of the Yinxu Ruins situated on both banks of the Huanhe River in the northwest suburbs of Anyang. The 3,300-year-old Yinxu Ruins has been confirmed by historic documents and archaeological excavations as the capital site of late Shang (Yin) Dynasty, the first such ruins so confirmed in Chinese history. Walking slowly into the Yinxu Museum, Xi attentively observed the bronze ware, jade ware, oracle bone inscriptions, and other unearthed relics. Then, Xi visited the Exhibition Hall of Chariot Pits where he observed the original-sized samples of animal-driven carts and remains of a Shang Dynasty road. He pointed out that oracle bone inscriptions unearthed at Yinxu Ruins kept the evidence of the Chinese written language of 3,000 years ago, helping to bring recorded Chinese history nearly 1,000 years earlier than previously believed. "I

have long been yearning for visiting here. This time I come here for a deeper study and understanding of the Chinese civilization so that we can make the past serve the present, and draw inspirations for better building modern Chinese civilization," he said.

The Chinese characters are extraordinary and serve as a tie in the forming and development of Chinese nation, and the archaeologists have done a great job in this regard. We should attach more importance to and put more efforts on archaeological research to carry forward the project of tracing the origins of the Chinese civilization. With a long and continuous history stretching back to antiquity, the Chinese civilization shaped our great nation, and this nation will continue to be great, he added. Xi urged efforts to carry forward the fine traditional culture through discovery, research and conservation of the cultural relics. He stressed that fine traditional Chinese culture is the root of the Party's new theories. The ultimate approach of adapting Marxism to the Chinese context and the needs of the times is to integrate the basic tenets of Marxism with China's specific realities and fine traditional culture. We should stay confident in our culture and be more confident and prouder to be Chinese. Chen Xi and other leading officials of relevant central authorities accompanied Xi in these activities.

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JAPAN: Digital Minister Says He's Ready for a Fight

Japan's media-savvy digital minister said Friday he's ready to take an iron-fisted approach to speed up the nation's slow embrace of online services at government offices and workplaces. KONO Taro — a political heavyweight who has been minister of defence, foreign affairs and Covid vaccines — has already declared war on fax machines, floppy disks and other obsolete technologies that are still common in the world's third-largest economy. "I have no plan to be a coordinator. If there are people who have a problem with it, I will beat them up," he quipped in an online interview with a small group of journalists. "The pandemic forced everyone to acknowledge that Japan's digitalisation has been slow," added Kono. "It has become crystal clear, compared with other countries, how difficult it is to do business and to conduct daily affairs." With Kono's new comments, comes the decision to digitalize passport procedures for Japanese citizens.

Starting March 27 next year, the Japanese government said it will put the revised passport law in effect making procedures for the renewal of passports available online. People will also become able to report their lost passports online. These online procedures will be available at some Japanese diplomatic offices abroad from March 27, and in June or later in Japan depending on the prefecture. The process of issuing new passports is expected to go online in fiscal 2024, which begins in April that year. Japan is often internationally considered a byword for high-tech, but fax

machines are still routinely used by businesses and households along with email and texting apps. Floppy disks and CD-ROMs are less visible to consumers, but some official documents are legally required to be stored in these outdated formats. “Throughout Covid, we have seen so many countries move their government procedures onto digital platforms,” Kono said.

“At the same time, we are not there yet.” He blamed a culture that does not necessarily encourage people to suggest change in the workplace, which he said results in people pretending not to notice problems. “People are so quick to make changes if something is not convenient at home. But once you step out of your house, everything becomes someone else’s problem,” Kono said. “We must build a society where people take actions and suggest improvements to better society. Kono, who has also sought to phase out the personal ink signature stamps known as hanko, said he was optimistic society would embrace the convenience of digitalisation. “If people feel their lives are getting better, more convenient, easier, I think that means the digital agency is successful,” he said. “How do you measure that? If you see people have more smiles on their face.”

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Japan Plans New Joint Command to Manage Armed Forces Report

Japan will set up a new joint command to manage the operations of its land, sea and air forces, the Nikkei newspaper reported on Saturday, as part of a major defense overhaul in the face of China's increasing assertiveness over Taiwan. The government aims to have the joint command functioning by 2024. It will be tasked with coordinating strategies and boosting Japan's defense cooperation with the U.S. military, Nikkei reported. The defense ministry could not be reached for comment outside regular business hours. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's government is boosting its military spending in response to China's growing might and geopolitical uncertainty over Taiwan and North Korea's missile developments. The new arrangements will be included in the defense overhaul that the government will unveil by the year-end, Nikkei said. The joint command will be overseen by a joint commander, a newly created position that will report directly to Japan's defense minister, it added.

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SOUTH KOREA: Special Parliamentary Committee on Pension Reform Kicks Off

A parliamentary special committee on pension reform kicked off Tuesday, vowing to reach all-party cooperation to improve the financial soundness of the national

pension system. Revamping the national pension system is one of President Yoon Suk-yeol's key reform agenda items. Yoon has called for speedy reform of the pension system amid concerns it could dry up faster than expected due to rapid aging. "South Korea is experiencing a low birth rate and the aging population at an unprecedented speed across the world," Rep. Joo Ho-young of the ruling People Power Party (PPP), who chairs the committee, said. According to Joo, 100 people of working age support 25 seniors currently but will have to support at least 100 seniors in 2070. South Korea is expected to become the country with the largest share of people aged 65 years or older in the world in 2044 due to rapid aging, according to data from Statistics Korea. "The committee shoulders the heavy burden of settling people's conflict over the matter and finding a way to guarantee stable distribution of pension to all generations," Joo said. The special committee will comprise 13 lawmakers, including six each from the PPP and the main opposition Democratic Party, and one from the minor progressive Justice Party.

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Yoon Calls on All Ministries to Focus on Promoting Industries

President Yoon Suk-yeol instructed all government ministries on Thursday to gear their efforts toward promoting industries and boosting exports to help overcome the economic crisis. Yoon made the remarks as he presided over the 11th emergency economic and public livelihood meeting, which unlike previous editions was aired live on national TV to give the public a better sense of how the government is handling the economy amid high interest rates and high inflation. "I would like all ministries to work with the mindset that we are all running together to promote our industries and boost exports," he said during the meeting at the presidential office. Specifically, Yoon said he would like the defense ministry to work as if it is the defense industry ministry, the agriculture ministry like the agricultural industry ministry and the land ministry like the construction and transportation industry ministry. The 80-minute meeting was attended by all the economy-related ministers, as well as the defense minister, the national security adviser and presidential officials.

They took turns presenting policy proposals related to their respective fields, including the land ministry's plan to remove additional regulations in the real estate market next month and the SMEs ministry's plan to invest 2 trillion won (US\$1.4 billion) in 10 chosen sectors, including mobility, bio and artificial intelligence, over the next five years. Yoon weighed in throughout the discussion, calling for a comprehensive plan on stabilizing supply chains and emphasizing the close link between nuclear power plants, the defense industry and national security. "I believe all ministries should work together with the industry and defense ministries in the lead so that we can successfully export our nuclear power plants and defense industry items as a package to the Middle East and Europe," he said. Yoon further called attention to the importance of giving tax breaks in order to attract more

investment and improving the quality of digital education, such as in AI, at schools.

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Role of Administrative Authorities Questioned in Itaewon Disaster

Questions are increasingly raised as to whether the Itaewon disaster could have been prevented with preparatory safety measures by the administrative authorities and police. Some critics say the Seoul city government, the office of Yongsan Ward to which Itaewon belongs and police should have taken sufficient accident prevention measures in anticipation of a record Halloween crowd, whereas others say the disaster was beyond the realm of prediction. At least 154 people have been killed in the deadly stampede in a narrow 3.2-meter-wide downhill alley in Itaewon late Saturday night. A crowd of nearly 100,000 people was expected to flock to the nightlife district Saturday to celebrate the first Halloween event without social distancing restrictions, including outdoor mask-wearing rules, in three years. Critics are asking questions about why and how the administrative authorities and police had failed to prepare in advance against crowd-related accidents.

They say there was a kind of prior warning signal, as eyewitness accounts have said on social media that some people were pushed by the crowd and fell in the same alley the previous night but were not injured after other people stopped moving. Eyewitnesses also said it was already difficult to walk around in Itaewon on Friday due to a huge crowd. Despite the apparent warning signals, however, the Seoul city government did not seem to have taken any specific measures to avoid Halloween-related safety accidents in advance. "We did not prepare special measures or operate a situation room for Halloween, because no large-scale event was scheduled by an organization in Itaewon," said a Seoul city government official, adding the concerned ward office has mapped out accident prevention measures. In contrast, the municipal government had established safety measures, including control of roads and deployment of safety personnel, for the 2022 Seoul International Fireworks Festival held in Yeouido, central Seoul, on Oct. 8 in anticipation of a crowd of 1 million.

The Yongsan Ward office held an emergency meeting Thursday under the supervision of its deputy head to discuss Halloween-related safety measures for the Itaewon area, but the discussions were reportedly focused on COVID-19 quarantine measures, inspection of facilities and restaurant food safety. Control of roads and one-way passing for many narrow alleys, where Halloween events were concentrated, were not implemented. The ward office said about 150 civil servants in 28 teams were deployed to Itaewon from Thursday to Saturday, but it seemed the manpower was not enough to cope with the tens of thousands of people. The Seoul police also said they deployed about 200 officers to Itaewon on Saturday, though

their tasks were mostly focused on cracking down on sex crimes, drugs and theft, instead of safety management. Minister of the Interior and Safety Lee Sang-min also said this year's Halloween crowd in Itaewon was not worryingly large compared with previous years and the police force was kind of scattered due to riots and demonstrations all over the city on the same day.

Critics and online commentators have also said subway trains should have passed through Itaewon Station on Subway Line 6 without stopping Saturday night, in order to adjust the traffic volume around the crowded district. But Seoul Metro explained that bypassing Itaewon Station was not appropriate, because the start and end times of Halloween events were not fixed and the crowd did not surge at a specific time. The critics also noted there should have been a ban on vehicles in parts of Itaewon's main roads and a space for people to gather should have been secured in advance. Many safety experts still point out the disaster may have occurred due to a mix of other factors, including collective panic, an unsafe environment and unsafe behaviors. "The Itaewon disaster was beyond the realm of prediction, as the accident occurred because an unspecified number of people gathered in an uncontrolled environment," said a university professor, calling for the installation of more surveillance cameras in accident-prone areas and real-time analyses of population density for the activation of relevant safety measures.

From <https://en.yna.co.kr> 10/31/2022

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Yoon Calls for Crowd Control System for Spontaneous Events

President Yoon Suk-yeol instructed the government on Monday to come up with a crowd control system for unorganized and spontaneous events, following the deaths of at least 154 people in a Halloween crowd crush in Seoul. Yoon's instructions came during a weekly meeting with Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, which on Monday was joined by the interior and health ministers to discuss the government's overall response to the tragedy in Itaewon last Saturday. "President Yoon said ahead of the discussions that he feels an indescribable sadness and responsibility as the president responsible for the people's lives and safety when he thinks of the victims and their families," deputy presidential spokesperson Lee Jae-myung told reporters. "In particular, he once again expressed his grief that so many young people at such a tender age were struck by tragedy before they even had a chance to pursue their dreams," he said. Many of the victims were in their 20s as the crowd crush appeared to have happened when a surge of Halloween revelers tried to move through a narrow alley connecting two streets in Itaewon.

"President Yoon stressed the need to come up with a crowd accident prevention safety control system for use during spontaneous group events that, like in this instance, do not have an organizer," Lee said. In the case of organized events, organizers are required to draw up safety control measures and have them approved

by the relevant local governments and police and firefighting authorities, he explained. "But in the absence of an organizer, it's not easy to preemptively implement safety measures," he said, adding that he expects there to be discussions in the future about allowing local governments to request the minimum safety measures from the police, such as traffic and crowd control, at their own discretion and for the police to enforce emergency control measures if necessary after informing local governments. Lee said the president also called for thorough assistance for funeral preparations and medical treatment for the injured, as well as a complete investigation into the cause of the accident and transparent disclosure of its outcome.

Yoon further expressed his gratitude to the "heroes," including citizens, medical workers, firefighters and police officers, who came to the aid of the victims by performing CPR and taking them to hospitals, and to the entire nation sharing in the grief. Yoon earlier declared a period of national mourning through Saturday and ordered the lowering of flags to half-mast at government offices. Kim Eun-hye, senior presidential secretary for press affairs, said Yoon decided to suspend his daily morning Q&A sessions with reporters during the mourning period, as his government focuses on dealing with the aftermath of the deadly crowd crush. Doorstepping Yoon as he arrives for work has become a daily routine, except on days when the president travels outside of the capital. At a meeting with his aides later Monday, Yoon again instructed them to make utmost efforts to handle the disaster, Kim said.

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South-East Asia

CAMBODIA: King Dismisses Agriculture Minister

Cambodian King Norodom Sihamoni on Saturday signed a royal decree to sack Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Veng Sakhon from his post. In the royal decree, the king said, "Veng Sakhon is dismissed from the post of the minister of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries." "Samdech Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, must take responsibility to implement this royal decree from the day of signature," the king said. Sakhon, 62, had held the post of the minister of agriculture, forestry and fisheries since April 2016. It's rare that a minister is fired from a job in the Southeast Asian nation. No reasons were explained for the dismissal, but in February, Hun Sen warned to dismiss Sakhon for incompetence and non-cooperation with other government ministries. On Saturday, Hun Sen also made a decision, designating Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Finance Aun Pornmoniroth as the acting minister of agriculture, forestry and fisheries, in addition to his current job.

From <https://english.news.cn/> 10/08/2022

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Cambodia's New Agriculture Minister Wins Parliament's Confidence Vote

Cambodia's National Assembly on Friday endorsed senior energy official Dith Tina as the minister of agriculture, forestry and fisheries, replacing former minister Veng Sakhon. Some 111 lawmakers, including Prime Minister Samdech Techo Hun Sen, who was present during the voting session, unanimously gave Tina their vote of confidence. "Based on the result of this vote, I would like to declare that Dith Tina won the National Assembly's confidence vote as the minister of agriculture, forestry, and fisheries," National Assembly President Samdech Heng Samrin announced at the end of the voting session. Tina, former secretary of state at the Ministry of Mines and Energy, replaced Sakhon, who was appointed as a minister attached to the Prime Minister.

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MALAYSIA: PM Dissolves Parliament, Calls for Early National Election

Malaysian Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob announced the dissolution of the country's parliament on Monday, paving the way for national elections which must be held in the next 60 days. In a televised speech, Ismail Sabri said he had received the consent of the country's King Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah in accordance with the country's constitution. Ismail Sabri said the past years have seen several unprecedented developments after the national elections in 2018, including political uncertainties with the changes of several prime ministers and the COVID-19 pandemic, which together have harmed the country's socio-economic and political situation. "With this announcement, the mandate will be returned to the people. The people's mandate is a powerful antidote for the country to restore political stability and create a government which is firm, stable and respected after the elections," he said. "May the people use the power they have to choose a government that is able to maintain political stability, restore and strengthen the economy, as well as maintain the harmony of the Malaysian family and unite a multi-religious, multi-racial and multi-ethnic Malaysia," he said.

In a statement Sultan Abdullah said he had no option but to consent to the dissolution of Parliament so that the mandate to choose the government would be returned to the people. He stressed that a strong country is important to guarantee continued political and economic stability for the wellbeing of the people and the country as a whole. The date of polling day is yet to be announced by the Election Commission of Malaysia. Normally, a general election should be held no later than two months after the dissolution of the parliament. Voters will elect the 222-member Dewan Rakyat, or the House of Representatives. The possibility of national elections

have been hotly discussed in recent months with the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), the biggest party in the ruling coalition, calling for elections to end the political uncertainty which has seen two prime ministers appointed since 2020 following the resignation of former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad in February of that year. Muhyiddin Yassin was sworn in as the prime minister on March 1, 2020 but later resigned following the withdrawal of support by members of parliament from his own coalition. Ismail Sabri was then appointed as the prime minister on Aug. 21, 2021. Azmi Hassan, a senior research fellow at the Nusantara Academy for Strategic Research, told Xinhua in a phone interview that UMNO is pushing for an election due to the current advantageous situation for them. "As for the factors to be considered by voters, what they want is a strong government which has a solid majority. Political stability is a key consideration for voters who have grown weary over the frequent changes and general political instability," he said. "It is also important that any government coming in must be able to deliver on economic rejuvenation as the country has suffered setbacks caused by the pandemic and now the global uncertainty due to the conflict in Ukraine which has in part driven up food prices and inflation," he added.

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Malaysia to Hold General Election on Nov. 19

Malaysia will hold the general election on Nov. 19, the country's election commission said on Thursday. The nomination of candidates will be held on Nov. 5, providing two weeks for official election campaigning, commission chairman Abdul Ghani Salleh told a press conference. There will be 363,515 election workers who will operate 8,958 voting centers across the country to serve a total of 21,173,638 registered voters, the official said. Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob dissolved parliament on Oct. 10, paving the way for a snap election, citing the need to end the political uncertainty which has seen two prime ministers appointed since 2020 following the resignation of former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad in February of that year. Muhyiddin Yassin was sworn in as the prime minister on March 1, 2020 but later resigned following the withdrawal of support by members of parliament from his own coalition. Ismail Sabri was then appointed as the prime minister on Aug. 21, 2021.

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THAILAND: Prayut Not Exceeding 8-Year Term Limit as PM

Thailand's Constitutional Court ruled on Friday that Prayut Chan-o-cha has not reached an eight-year term limit as prime minister, a move that will enable Prayut to resume his duties after being suspended last month. Judges of the court voted 6 to 3 to decide that under the 2017 constitution, which came into effect on April 6, 2017, the count of Prayut's premiership should start from April 6, 2017, and thus he has not

completed his term as the prime minister, according to a statement issued by the court on Friday. Acting government spokesperson Anucha Burapachaisri said after the ruling that Prayut respects the ruling of the Constitutional Court. In August, 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 had been serving as the interim prime minister, while Prayut remained as the defense minister.

From <https://english.news.cn> 09/30/2022

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VIETNAM: Ministries' Budget Transparency "Slightly Improved" in 2021

The Ministry Open Budget Index (MOBI) in 2021 grew by 9.26 points to 30.9 out of 100 points. The result suggested that ministries and authorities have been more transparent in budget information for 2021. However, the index is still at a worryingly low level. Out of the 44 ministries and organisations researched, the Ministry of Finance topped the list with a score of 76.16. VTV and the State Bank of Việt Nam placed second and third with 72.09 points and 59.09 points, respectively. The index was published on Tuesday by the Budget Transparency Alliance for Progress (BTAP), the Việt Nam Centre for Economic and Strategic Studies (VESS), and the Centre for Development and Integration (CDI) at a press conference in Hà Nội. According to the creators, MOBI is calculated based on four main criteria: readiness, completeness, availability and continuity of budget documents. "We recognised the effort of authorities to improve budget transparency," said Nguyễn Quang Thương, CEO of CDI. "In the three years from 2018 to 2020, no ministries and authorities met the criteria for 'complete' budget transparency, but in 2021 we have made progress due to the efforts of the Ministry of Finance, VTV and the State Bank."

"However, we still have a long way to go to achieve the budget transparency goal of the 2015 Law on State Budget," Thương added. According to the report, up until March 31, 2022, 14 ministries and authorities have not publicised budget documents on their online portal pages. "After almost a decade of the new Law on State Budget being implemented, authorities seemed to have not seriously publicised their budget," said Nguyễn Đức Thành, Director of VESS, "This is a worrying reality in public management." Along with the MOBI for state agencies, BTAP also has another index on budget transparency, the POBI, used for rating the public budget transparency of provinces. POBI 2021 results, published on September 29, are more than double the MOBI at 69.53 out of 100 points. "When compared to the localities, the transparency of state agencies and ministries has not improved," said Assoc. Prof. Dr. Vũ Sỹ Cường of the Việt Nam Academy of Finance, "Central government agencies must play a primary role in publicising their budgets."

In terms of the four criteria, MOBI has shown that more efforts are needed from government agencies to have a more transparent and accessible budget. For the criterion "Availability of Budget Documents", only 30 out of 44 government authorities have published at least one budget document in 2021. However, none of the 44 agencies published the documents on time, thus failing to qualify for the "Readiness" criterion. Thirty-three agencies passed the "Accessibility" criterion, with documents being published in accessible formats such as PDFs and Excel spreadsheets. In terms of "Completeness", the Ministry of Finance, VTV and the State Bank of Việt Nam are still the pioneers. The MoF led with 53.49 points in completeness. The research panel and creators of the MOBI also recommended the Government and the National Assembly urge authorities to adhere to public budget transparency rules, in compliance with the Law on State Budget.

From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 10/19/2022

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Vietnam's Top Legislature Elects 2 New Ministers

The 15th National Assembly of Vietnam, the country's top legislature, elected Dao Hong Lan and Nguyen Van Thang as minister of health and minister of transport respectively on Friday. With 434 out of 458 lawmakers present at the event voting yes, a resolution was adopted by the top legislature to elect Lan and Thang as the new ministers for the 2021-2026 tenure at the ongoing fourth session of the 15th National Assembly, Vietnam News Agency reported. The National Assembly also passed a resolution electing Ngo Van Tuan, a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam and deputy auditor general in charge of the State Audit Office of Vietnam, as auditor general for the same tenure.

From <https://english.news.cn/> 10/21/2022

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South Asia

INDIA: 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.

From <https://egov.eletsonline.com> 10/15/2022

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Central-West Asia

AZERBAIJAN: DIS Group Talks High Dev't Level of Digital Governance, Online Services

Azerbaijan's IT sector is advancing rapidly in many areas, unlike in the neighboring countries, particularly some of the former Soviet states, Deputy Director of the DIS Group Consulting Division Sergei Yevtushenko told Trend. According to Yevtushenko, the UN included Azerbaijan in the list of top countries for digital governance and online services back in 2020. "The country is focused on proven and reliable technologies through using foreign experience at optimal costs. In addition, IT specialists adopt world expertise and apply the acquired knowledge both in technologies and in approaches to the organization and implementation of projects, infrastructure development, and building the IT support landscape," he said. "Azerbaijan's applying foreign experience doesn't negate the success in developing its own ideas and innovations, especially in education, technological innovations, and intellectual property," the expert noted. He also noted that the formation of a resilient startup ecosystem will lead to increase of attractiveness of innovation activity and steady development of the IT industry in Azerbaijan.

"The government of Azerbaijan is providing support to appearance of both local and international professional venture investors, development of infrastructure, technology parks and innovation centers in the country, forming respective legal framework. Such steps greatly increase the interest of both applicants and investors," Yevtushenko said. "Startups are a showcase for talented people and innovative ideas, but rather often large companies seek to use these opportunities for their own benefit. Given the shortage of talented specialists, these companies employ them, apply their innovations, receive additional profit and don't always fully share it with

the authors of ideas. This occurs in many markets, including in Azerbaijan," he stressed. The expert also noted that the launch of payment solutions such as Apple Pay and Google Pay in Azerbaijan, as well as plans to launch Samsung Pay and PayPal, will significantly expand the e-commerce services. "These solutions make it possible to simplify and speed up payments for goods and services, as well as increase their security. This also has a positive effect on customer satisfaction, leading to the development and simplification of doing business," he said.

"Besides, the payment solutions allow not only to simplify the acceptance of payments in shops, cafes and restaurants, and filling stations but also to bring online commerce to a new level, including mobile applications, payment for services, utilities and other services." "With the launch of such payment tools as Apple Pay and Google Pay, the users won't need to enter bank card data or risky confidential information, and the risk of losing cards and their unauthorized use will be reduced. Moreover, ample opportunities emerge to develop interesting loyalty programs, bonus accruals, cashback and other customer-oriented benefits," Yevtushenko said. "The possibilities for instant issuance of virtual payment cards are also expanding. This can be used not only by banks but also, for example, by mobile operators, turning mobile phone accounts into full-fledged financial instruments," the expert added. He emphasized the technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Industry 4.0) in Azerbaijan can first of all be used in industry and manufacturing. "The Industry 4.0 approach doesn't focus on any particular area, and it can be applied in various industries. As a first application of this concept, digitalization tasks can be proposed.

Digitalization can be applied to various objects and processes. Both the equipment and the personnel, both the actual performance of the equipment and financial planning can have 'Digital copies," Yevtushenko noted. "The use of 'digital copies' minimizes possible risks, while providing almost unlimited opportunities. This includes building models, conducting research and analytics, and testing hypotheses. As a result, we get the opportunity to test the solution even before its actual implementation, and then implement it," he said.

From <https://en.trend.az> 10/04/2022

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KAZAKHSTAN: New Ambassadors to Switzerland, Austria and Singapore Named

President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev appointed new ambassadors to Switzerland, Austria and Singapore, the Akorda press service said on October 21, Trend reports citing Kazinform. President of Kazakhstan decreed to appoint Alibek Bakayev as the Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Austria, Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the international organizations in Vienna and relieved him of his duties as the Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Kazakhstan to the Swiss Confederation, Extraordinary and

Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Kazakhstan to the Principality of Liechtenstein, State of the City of Vatican, the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta concurrently. Kassym-Jormart Tokayev decreed to appoint Kairat Sarzhanov as the Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Kazakhstan to the Swiss Confederation, to appoint Askar Kuttykadam as the Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Singapore.

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TURKMENISTAN: SOCAR Plans to Open Representative Office

The State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR) plans to open a representative office in Turkmenistan, Trend reports with reference to "SNG.fm" online radio. This was announced by Deputy Head of the Department for Science and Technology of SOCAR head Office Emin Alekperov at the 27th "Oil and Gas of Turkmenistan -2022" International Conference (OGT-2022), which started on October 26 in the capital of Turkmenistan, Ashgabat. He noted that SOCAR is engaged in the exploration, development, production, transportation and refining of oil and gas. The company has joint ventures and its own factories in a number of countries, representative offices in more than 10 countries, as well as a research and design institute, whose branches are located in Uzbekistan. Alekperov noted that SOCAR President Rovshan Najaf held a meeting with the Turkmen side, where the topic of transportation of natural resources was discussed, as well as the issue of opening an office of the company in Turkmenistan. Furthermore, he stressed that the establishment of political, economic, and cultural ties always has a positive effect on the development of interstate cooperation, and also added that business meetings are actively held at the OGT-2022 international forum, which help to accelerate the resolution of technical issues on interaction.

From <https://en.trend.az> 10/28/2022

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Oceania

AUSTRALIA: Groundbreaking Parental Leave for Public Sector Workers

Paramedics, police officers, teachers and other public sector workers across the state will be supported to spend more precious time with their young babies, with major changes to NSW public service parental leave entitlements now in effect. Every mother and father in the NSW public sector is now entitled to 14 weeks' paid parental leave as part of groundbreaking changes to remove the distinction between a 'primary' and 'secondary' carer in the NSW Government's paid parental leave scheme. Parents can now also use their leave up to two years after the birth, adoption, surrogacy or permanent out-of-home care placement of their child. An

additional two weeks' 'bonus leave' is now also available where parents more equally share childcare responsibilities between partners, allowing public sector employees to take up to 16 weeks' paid parental leave.

Premier Dominic Perrottet said NSW was leading the way on parental leave in Australia because giving parents more choice about how they juggle care and careers helps strengthen families and women's career and economic opportunities. "Giving parents the support and real options to share care in the early years of their child's life, lets families choose what works for them and delivers equal opportunity for NSW Government employees," Mr Perrottet said. "Giving fathers the option to spend more time with their young ones and mothers the option to return to work when it suits them will build strong foundations for families and benefit the whole community." As part of the 2022-23 Budget, the NSW Government committed \$16.5 billion over 10 years to level the playing field for women, with \$4.9 billion committed over the four years to 2025-26, the biggest investment in the State's history to support women and families.

Treasurer Matt Kean said the updated public sector parental leave scheme is one of the first of its kind in the country, and encouraged other governments and the private sector to follow suit. "The NSW Government is the largest employer in Australia and we are leading the way by ensuring families of all shapes and sizes will benefit from these pioneering changes," Mr Kean said. "Caring for children is one of the most important jobs in our society and it's only right that we value it appropriately." Public sector workers undergoing fertility treatment now also have access to up to five days' fertility leave per year. Minister for Women Bronnie Taylor said the NSW Government is committed to ensuring NSW is the best place in the country for women to live, work and raise a family. "Strong parental leave entitlements play a major role in supporting women's economic opportunity and career progression," Ms Taylor said. "Paid parental leave created with gender equality at its core will contribute to increased participation in the workforce, improved economic opportunities and greater financial wellbeing for women." The updated parental leave scheme came into effect on 1 October 2022.

From <https://afndaily.com.au> 10/15/2022

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3、 Management, Capacity Building and Innovation

Asia-Pacific

Tertiary Education Rates Reach Record High, with More Efforts Needed to Expand Vocational Education and Training, Says OECD

The share of young adults with advanced qualifications across the OECD, driven by the growing need for advanced skills in labour markets, reached a record 48% of 25-34 year-olds in 2021, compared to just 27% in 2000. Shares of tertiary educated 25-34 year olds are highest in Korea (69.3%) and Canada (66.4%), according to a new OECD report. Education at a Glance 2022 reports that the increase in tertiary attainment was especially strong among women, who now make up 57% of all tertiary educated 25-34 year olds, compared to 43% for their male peers. “The dramatic rise in educational attainment is providing a unique opportunity to fuel economic and social progress in our countries,” OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann said. “It is essential that countries continue to innovate and improve their education systems to ensure that everyone benefits from the advantages of a good education and acquires the skills they need to succeed.”

Having a university degree gives young people strong job market advantages. In 2021, the average unemployment rate for individuals across the OECD with tertiary attainment was 4%, compared to 6% for those with upper secondary attainment and 11% with below upper secondary attainment. Full-time workers with tertiary attainment also earn on average around 50% more than workers with upper secondary attainment and nearly twice as much as workers without upper secondary attainment. Better educated adults may also find it easier to adopt new technologies that improve their quality of life. For example, 71% of 55-74 year-olds with tertiary attainment used online or video calls during the pandemic, allowing them to stay in touch with family and friends and avoid social isolation. Rates were highest in the Netherlands (84%) and Norway (83%). In contrast, only 34% of similarly aged adults with below upper secondary attainment reported making online or video calls.

Despite the benefits of obtaining a tertiary degree, many tertiary students do not complete their programmes of study. Only 39% of bachelor's students graduate within the expected timeframe for their programme. Completion rates are particularly low among men in all OECD countries. On average, men are 11 percentage points less likely to complete their tertiary programme within its theoretical duration than women. Spending on tertiary education per student has increased despite the growth in the number of students. Since 2012, the number of tertiary students has increased by 0.4% per year across the OECD, but spending on tertiary educational institutions increased by 1.6% per year in real terms over the same period. This led to an increase in average real spending per student of 1.2% annually.

But not all students are best served by a tertiary degree and more efforts need to be made to expand vocational education and training (VET). Making VET a first choice rather than a last resort for students requires new links between upper secondary VET and professional tertiary education to give VET graduates the opportunity to obtain additional qualifications at a later stage, according to the report. Education at a Glance 2022 also includes analysis of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education and the resulting accelerated adoption of digital teaching and learning.

More than half of the 27 countries with available data plan to continue the enhanced use of digital tools at lower secondary education. Around half of OECD countries reformed their regulatory or institutional frameworks during the pandemic to facilitate access to digital learning.

Most countries also found resources to purchase digital tools for in-classroom and remote learning and to train teachers in their use. However, to fully benefit from digitalisation, countries must strengthen the innovation culture in education, says the report. This will require improving institutional and regulatory frameworks, in particular governing digital education, and public procurement in the education sector to become more responsive to digital opportunities and create stronger incentives for private sector innovation. It will also require giving teachers the skills they need to use digital tools in the classroom and enhance their own professional development.

Education at a Glance provides comparable national statistics measuring the state of education worldwide. The report analyses the education systems of the OECD's 38 member countries, as well as of Argentina, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and South Africa. Further information on Education at a Glance, including country notes and key data, is available at: <http://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/>. Journalists are invited to contact OECD Director for Education and Skills Andreas Schleicher (tel. + 33 1 45 24 18 97) or the OECD's Media Office (tel. + 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/> 10/03/2022

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OECD International Migration Outlook 2022 to Be published Monday 10 October

The OECD International Migration Outlook 2022 will be published at 11.00 a.m. Paris time/09.00 a.m. GMT on Monday 10 October. OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann, together with OECD Director for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, Stefano Scarpetta, will present the Outlook's findings in a press conference at 11.00 a.m. Paris time/09.00 GMT. The press conference will be in English, with French interpretation. Register to attend the press conference in person. Journalists unable to attend can register in advance to participate in the press conference via Zoom. Once registered, you will receive an email with a Zoom link to connect.

The presentation will also be webcast live, without registration. The 2022 edition of the annual publication analyses recent developments in migration movements and policies. It also analyses recent changes on the labour market inclusion of

immigrants in OECD countries, and gives an overview of the refugee crisis triggered by the unprovoked war of aggression of Russia against Ukraine and of the policy responses in OECD countries. This year's edition has a focus on international students, including analysis of recent trends, attraction and retention policies, and the economic impact of international students. Journalists will be allowed advance access to the electronic version of the report, by e-mail and under embargo. In asking to receive the report under embargo, journalists undertake to respect the OECD's embargo procedures. Requests to receive the report by e-mail under embargo should be sent to embargo@oecd.org. The report will be sent under embargo on Friday 7 October. To get advance access to OECD reports, complete this short form. For further information, journalists are invited to contact Spencer Wilson of the OECD's Media Office (tel: + 33 1 45 24 81 18). 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/> 10/04/2022

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Global Progress in Reducing Extreme Poverty Grinds to a Halt

The world is unlikely to meet the goal of ending extreme poverty by 2030 absent history-defying rates of economic growth over the remainder of this decade, according to a new World Bank study. The study finds that COVID-19 dealt the biggest setback to global poverty-reduction efforts since 1990 and the war in Ukraine threatens to make matters worse. The Bank's latest [Poverty and Shared Prosperity Report](#) provides the first comprehensive look at the global landscape of poverty in the aftermath of the extraordinary series of shocks to the global economy over the past few years. It estimates that the pandemic pushed about 70 million people into extreme poverty in 2020, the largest one-year increase since global poverty monitoring began in 1990. As a result, an estimated 719 million people subsisted on less than \$2.15 a day by the end of 2020.

“Progress in reducing extreme poverty has essentially halted in tandem with subdued global economic growth,” said World Bank Group President David Malpass. “Of concern to our mission is the rise in extreme poverty and decline of shared prosperity brought by inflation, currency depreciations, and broader overlapping crises facing development. It means a grim outlook for billions of people globally. Adjustments of macroeconomic policies are needed to improve the allocation of global capital, foster currency stability, reduce inflation, and restart growth in median income. The alternative is the status quo—slowing global growth, higher interest rates, greater risk aversion, and fragility in many developing countries.” The report indicates 2020 marked a historic turning point—when the era of global income convergence yielded to divergence. The poorest people bore the steepest costs of the pandemic: income losses averaged 4% for the poorest 40%, double the losses of the wealthiest 20% of

the income distribution. Global inequality rose, as a result, for the first time in decades.

Strong fiscal policy measures made a notable difference in reducing COVID-19's impact on poverty. In fact, the average poverty rate in developing economies would have been 2.4 percentage points higher without a fiscal response. Yet government spending proved far more beneficial to poverty reduction in the wealthiest countries, which generally managed to *fully* offset COVID-19's impact on poverty through fiscal policy and other emergency support measures. Developing economies had fewer resources and therefore spent less and achieved less: upper-middle-income economies offset just 50% of the poverty impact, and low- and lower-middle income economies offset barely a quarter of the impact. *"Over the next decade, investing in better health and education will be crucial for developing economies, given the severe learning losses and health-related setbacks they suffered during the pandemic,"* said **Indermit Gill, the World Bank's Chief Economist and Senior Vice President for Development Economics.** *"In a time of record debt and depleted fiscal resources, this will not be easy. Governments will need to concentrate their resources on building human capital and maximizing growth."*

The new report is the first to provide current and historical data on the new [global extreme-poverty line](#), which has been adjusted upward to \$2.15 a day to reflect the latest 2017 [purchasing-power-parity data](#). Extreme poverty fell dramatically across the world from 1990 through 2019, the latest year for which official data are available. But progress slowed after 2014, and policymakers now confront a tougher environment: Extreme poverty is concentrated in parts of the world where it will be hardest to eradicate—in Sub-Saharan Africa, in conflict-affected areas, and in rural areas. Sub-Saharan Africa now accounts for 60% of all people in extreme poverty—389 million, more than any other region. The region's poverty rate is about 35%, the world's highest. To achieve the 2030 poverty goal, each country in the region would need to achieve per-capita GDP growth of 9% per year for the remainder of this decade. That's an exceptionally high hurdle for countries whose per-capita GDP growth averaged 1.2 percent in the decade before COVID-19.

National policy reforms can help restart progress in reducing poverty, the report finds. Stepped-up global cooperation will also be necessary. In fiscal policy, governments should act promptly on three fronts:

- *Avoid broad subsidies, increase targeted cash transfers:* Half of all spending on energy subsidies in low- and middle- income economies goes to the richest 20 percent of the population who consume more energy. Cash transfers are a far more effective mechanism for supporting poor and vulnerable groups.
- *Focus on long-term growth:* High-return investments in education, research and development, and infrastructure projects need to be made today. In a time of scarce resources, more efficient spending and improved preparation for the next crisis will be key.

- *Mobilize domestic revenues without hurting the poor.* Property taxes and carbon taxes can help raise revenue without hurting the poorest. So can broadening the base of personal and corporate income taxes. If sales and excise taxes do need to be raised, governments should minimize economic distortions and negative distributional impacts by simultaneously using targeted cash transfers to offset their effects on the most vulnerable households.

From <https://www.worldbank.org/> 10/05/2022

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Countries Making Substantial Progress Towards Implementation of the Two-Pillar International Tax Reform

A year after the international community reached a landmark agreement on a two-pillar solution to reform the international tax rules to address the tax challenges arising from globalisation and digitalisation, strong progress continues towards its implementation. During the 14th Plenary meeting of the OECD/G20 Inclusive Framework on BEPS, which drew more than 500 delegates from over 135 countries and jurisdictions, delegates agreed to release a new Progress Report of the Administration and Tax Certainty Aspects for public consultation. This Progress Report includes the rules on the administration of the new taxing right under Pillar One, including the tax-certainty related provisions and follows the release of the first progress report for public consultation in July. These two reports, along with a series of rolling public consultations earlier this year, provide a clear overview of the proposed overall design of the rules and how the rules will operate in practice.

“A year has passed since countries agreed a ground-breaking deal to address the tax challenges arising from the digitalisation and globalisation of the economy, and it has been marked by hard work to ensure swift implementation of this essential international reform package,” OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann said. The Inclusive Framework will aim to finalise a new Multilateral Convention for implementation of Pillar One by mid-2023, for entry into force in 2024. As governments turn to the adoption of the global minimum tax, a new report on Tax Incentives and the Global Minimum Corporate Tax presents concrete considerations for emerging and developing countries to consider as they prepare for implementation. The report, which builds on previous OECD work in this area, focuses on the need to reassess tax incentives in light of Pillar Two and offers a number of considerations for policy makers, particularly in developing countries.

The Inclusive Framework meeting also discussed capacity building initiatives including the roadmap for developing countries and the latest progress report of the Tax Inspectors Without Borders initiative. During the event, Mongolia also became the 100th jurisdictions to join the multilateral BEPS Convention which now covers around 1850 bilateral tax treaties worldwide. Media queries should be directed to Pascal Saint-Amans (+33 1 4524 9108), Director of the OECD Centre for Tax Policy

and Administration, Lawrence Speer (+33 1 4524 7970) 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/> 10/06/2022

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Fiera Capital Invests in World Bank Sustainable Development Bond to Raise Awareness for the Importance of Education and Innovation in Combatting Climate Change

The World Bank (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, IBRD, AAA/Aaa) today issued a MXN 205 million 3-year Sustainable Development Bond due October 2025 highlighting the importance of taking a holistic approach to sustainable development aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Fiera Capital was the sole investor in the transaction which was purchased for its Fiera Multi-Strategy Income Fund and its Fiera Global Impact Fund. J.P. Morgan acted as lead manager. The World Bank issues Sustainable Development Bonds in the international capital markets to support the financing of sustainable development activities designed to achieve positive social and environmental impacts in developing countries, while raising awareness of specific development themes across a range of sectors – in this case, the connection between education and innovation in tackling climate change. The transaction is highlighting SDG 4, Quality Education, SDG 9, Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, and SDG 13, Climate Action. This bond was issued under the World Bank's [Sustainable Development Bond Framework](#).

Heike Reichelt, Head of Investor Relations and Sustainable Finance, World Bank Treasury, said *“The World Bank takes a holistic approach and integrates climate considerations in all its activities across all sectors. Investments in World Bank bonds support the achievement of the SDGs and help illustrate their interconnectedness. We thank Fiera Capital for the investment and continued collaboration with the World Bank and for highlighting how SDGs can serve as a framework for sustainable investment.”*

Nicolas Vaugeois, Co-Lead & Portfolio Manager, Global Fixed Income, Fiera Capital, said *“Education is at the forefront of innovation that will help communities in their energy transition while fostering a positive impact on climate action. Moreover, cultivating our collaboration with the World Bank has allowed us to embrace a long-term commitment to responsible investing.”*

Alexandre Cousineau, Co-Lead & Portfolio Manager, Global Fixed Income, Fiera Capital, said *“We are pleased once again to be working with the World Bank on this transaction. Our goal is to raise the awareness for quality education which we believe is a key pillar to drive sustainable innovation in order to further accelerate the global energy transition.”*

Continue to Tackle Macroeconomic Challenges While Supporting the Middle Class and Preparing for Population Ageing, Says OECD

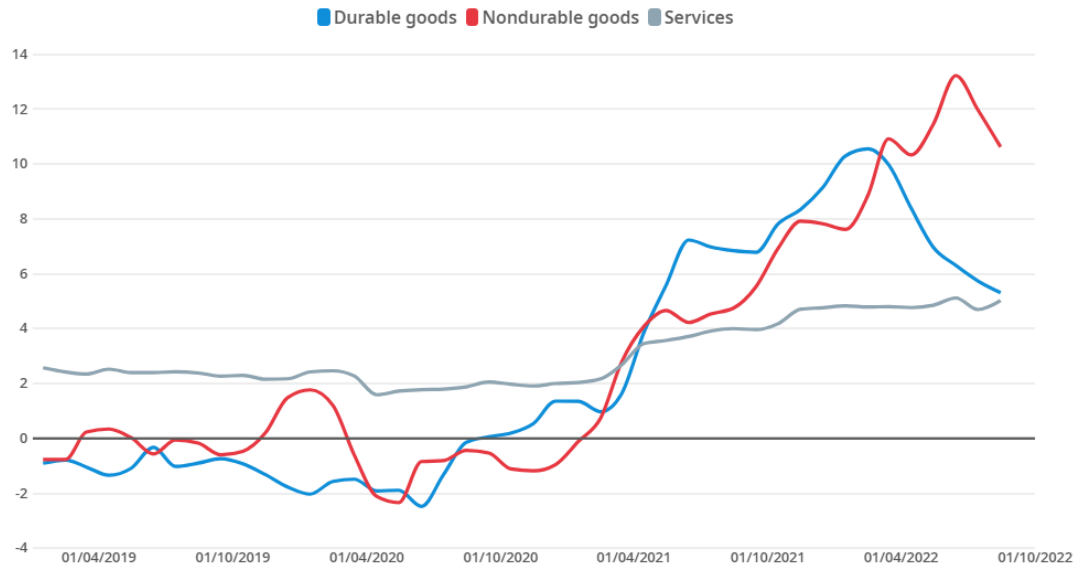
After a rapid recovery from the pandemic, the U.S. economy faces significant challenges from surging inflation and slowing economic activity, according to a new OECD report. Growth is projected to slow to 1.5% in 2022 and 0.5% in 2023 with inflation and tight financial conditions weighing on spending. Inflationary pressures – driven by strong demand, supply constraints and rising commodity prices following Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine – have broadened, with services inflation now accelerating. Inflationary pressures may prove persistent, prompting additional monetary tightening. Beyond managing immediate economic developments, the latest OECD Economic Survey of the United States says that preparing for the fiscal costs of an ageing population and easing financial pressures on middle-class households should be key priorities. The Survey draws attention to a polarisation in income and wealth distributions in recent years as the growth of disposable incomes of the U.S. middle class has been weak relative to that of higher and lower-income households, and a shrinking middle class has faced higher costs of living.

“Like many countries, the United States is dealing with the negative impact of lower global growth and higher inflation caused by Russia’s unprovoked, unjustifiable and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, while also still working through some of the economic implications of the pandemic,” OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann said, presenting the Survey in Washington. “The U.S. administration is rightly focusing on reducing income disparities and investing in infrastructure and the green transition. The flexible and innovative nature of the U.S. economy makes it well placed to tackle challenges and priorities, leveraging the structural transformations taking place.”



Inflationary pressures have broadened

Year-on-year % changes in U.S. inflation (PCE deflator) by component



Source: OECD (2022), OECD Economic Surveys: United States 2022



Middle-class households, which are key drivers of economic growth and social stability, had already been feeling the effects of rising housing, education, healthcare and childcare costs for some years. These rising costs, coupled with weak growth of incomes, have resulted in higher levels of household indebtedness. To ease some of these pressures, the Survey recommends raising public funding for childcare, widening the income eligibility for public programmes, fixing minimum federal childcare standards and establishing a consistent quality rating system across states. Middle and low-income households should also be supported with measures to ensure they can benefit from investment in energy efficiency and are shielded from energy price hikes. As part of broader efforts to advance the transition to net zero emissions, financial support and preferential lending for weather-proofing and retro-fitting housing should be expanded to cover middle-income households while states are incentivised to update building energy standards. Over the longer term, the United States will need to address fiscal challenges from ageing-related costs, which are set to increase by over 8% of GDP by 2060 without policy reforms, and foster efforts to strengthen the social safety net and achieve the climate transition. Stabilising the debt-to-GDP ratio will require additional tax revenue and more efficient spending in areas like health and infrastructure, where costs are high relative to other OECD countries.

In broadening the tax base, a priority should be to reduce tax distortions that erode revenues and have unwanted economic consequences. Reforms should include eliminating the mortgage interest tax deduction and phasing out the deduction of state and local taxes from federal income tax liabilities. Efforts to combat tax evasion could be strengthened by raising staffing in the U.S. tax administration closer to

average OECD levels, and the additional funding announced in the recent Inflation Reduction Act is a step in the right direction. See an Overview of the Survey with key findings and charts (this link can be included in media articles) For further information or queries, journalists are invited to contact Catherine Bremer in the OECD Media Office or Miguel Gorman in the OECD's Washington Centre. 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/> 10/12/2022

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Defying Global Turmoil, Poverty Rates Fall Across Central Asia

Poverty rates are falling again across Central Asia following a short but intense increase during the COVID-19 pandemic, said World Bank experts today at a [regional online briefing](#) to mark the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. But several challenges threaten the return to sustained poverty reduction, including the slowing global growth outlook, risks to remittances from migrants abroad, and rising prices, especially for food. The COVID-19 pandemic dealt a hard blow to poverty reduction progress around the world, essentially halting it and pushing about [70 million people into extreme poverty](#) in 2020. Central Asian countries also suffered setbacks from the pandemic. In 2021, the World Bank had [forecast](#) that labor market recovery, as well as the resumption of migration and remittances would help Central Asian countries return to pre-pandemic poverty levels and continue lifting people out of poverty in 2022 and onwards. The war in Ukraine and the surprisingly rapid increase in global food and fuel prices has greatly increased uncertainty, threatening to undo progress in the region's fight against poverty. Yet, as the World Bank discussion emphasized, most respondents to the "Listening to Central Asia" survey were increasingly optimistic about the health of local labor markets, and that in most places, incomes were rising faster than the cost of living, despite significant concern over the disruption global crises could have on their lives

The World Bank panel presented the latest World Bank estimates on poverty in Central Asia based on recently updated international poverty lines, set at US\$3.65 a day for lower-middle income countries like the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, and \$6.85 a day for upper-middle income countries like Kazakhstan. According to these new poverty lines, about five million people are poor using the lower-middle income country threshold, and 20 million people are poor using the upper-middle income country threshold. The new lines use up-to-date purchasing power parity conversion factors, which adjust for differences in the cost of living between countries. World Bank experts also outlined priority policy measures that can continue the momentum of recent progress, including a shift toward targeted cash transfers to reach those who need assistance the most and away from broad and expensive subsidies.

“Targeted cash transfers are an effective way of supporting the wellbeing of the most vulnerable. Globally, about 60 percent of all such spending goes to the poorest 40 percent of the population. In contrast, in many middle-income countries, like those Central Asia, about half of all spending on energy subsidies goes to the richest percent,” said **William Seitz, World Bank Senior Economist** for Central Asia. Experts also pointed to the need to prioritize public spending for human capital development. “While the latest poverty estimates for Central Asia show encouraging signs of recovery, many challenges remain,” said **Tatiana Proskuryakova, World Bank Regional Director for Central Asia**. “One of the most significant is the lasting impact of the pandemic on human capital development. The returns to society from efficient investments in education and health are among the highest available to governments in the region.”

World Bank experts also reviewed opportunities for governments to better mobilize revenues in a way that protects the poor and can fund necessary public investments. Policies discussed included:

- Greater reliance on land and property taxes, which currently contribute very little of the tax revenue in Central Asia;
- Increasing the use of health taxes, such as those on tobacco, alcohol, and sugary beverages;
- Establishing relatively flat tax rates for income and corporate tax in Central Asia, which can result in people in the middle and lower-income brackets contributing similar shares of their income in the form of taxes.

From <https://www.worldbank.org/> 10/17/2022

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Prevent Rather Than Fight the Next Pandemic with a One Health Approach

As the world continues to deal with the devastating effects of COVID-19, the World Bank is today releasing a new report that proposes actionable solutions to end the cycle of devastating pandemics. The pace of emerging infectious disease (EID) outbreaks has increased at an average annual rate of 6.7 percent from 1980 onwards and the number of outbreaks has grown to several hundred per year since 2000. This is largely due to humans extending their global footprint, altering natural habitats, and accelerating the spillover of animal microbes into human populations. Seventy-five percent of EIDs and almost all known pandemics result from increased contact between animals and people, causing more than 1 billion human infections and 1 million deaths each year. This, coupled with increasing movement of goods and people around the world, has demonstrated the ease of spread and volatility of EIDs.

In *Putting Pandemics Behind Us: Investing in One Health to Reduce Risks of Emerging Infectious Diseases*, policymakers, governments, and the international community are urged to invest in pandemic prevention and to move away from the business-as-usual approach based on containment and control after a disease has emerged. The report estimates that prevention costs guided by a One Health approach – which would sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals, and ecosystems – would range from \$10.3 billion to \$11.5 billion per year, compared to the cost of managing pandemics which, according to the recent estimate by the G20 Joint Finance and Health Taskforce, amounts to about \$30.1 billion per year. *“Prevention is better than cure. COVID-19 has shown that a pandemic risk anywhere becomes a pandemic risk everywhere. The economic case for One Health is powerful – the cost of prevention is extremely modest compared to the cost of managing and responding to pandemics,”* said Mari Pangestu, World Bank Managing Director of Development Policy and Partnerships.

Prevention costs are only about a third of the cost of preparedness, and less than 1 percent of the cost of COVID-19 in 2020 – when the global economy contracted by 4.3% or about \$3.6 trillion worth of goods, services and other output lost, and the public health response. Ultimately, prevention is a global public good: no country can be excluded from benefiting and there is no limit to how many countries can benefit. Unfortunately, there is chronic underinvestment in prevention and countries must take action. In addition, when prevention is successful, the benefits are invisible and do not manifest as crises that demand immediate attention. One Health is the global approach required to break this cycle of panic, neglect, and underinvestment.

Successful implementation of One Health will require improved coordination, communication, and collaboration between sectors reinforced by capacity building. It means managing trade-offs between development and holistic health objectives, and sharing costs more equitably through global coordination of policy and financing actions. Investing in One Health is an investment in humanity’s future. The framework is holistic and helps governments, international organizations, and donors direct financial resources to optimize scarce funding resources and prevent pandemics. One Health actions to prevent disease outbreaks are cost-effective, with an estimated annual rate of return of up to 86 percent. Now is the time to mainstream One-Health, leave the cycle of panic and neglect behind us, and put the notion that prevention is better than the cure into reality.

From <https://www.worldbank.org/> 10/24/2022

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Agriculture Ministers from More Than 45 Countries to Meet at OECD on 3-4 November 2022

Transformative solutions are urgently needed to address the challenges facing agriculture and food systems. High food prices, aggravated by Russia’s large-scale

aggression against Ukraine, have drastically increased the number of people at risk of hunger, malnutrition, and extreme poverty. Severe droughts in Europe, China and in North America are further exacerbating food security risks in the near term. Yet even before these disruptions, agriculture and food systems were facing a “triple challenge”. These include ensuring food security for a growing global population; providing livelihoods along the food chain; and enhancing the sustainability of the sector and its contribution to climate change mitigation. To address these challenges, the agricultural sector needs to do more with less, through well-targeted, comprehensive and inclusive policy mixes. Commitments to boost investment in innovation (R&D) and infrastructure are urgently required to put the agricultural sector on the necessary trajectory for sustainable productivity growth, ensuring global food security and achieving environmental goals.

Agriculture ministers and government representatives from more than 45 countries will meet in Paris at the OECD on 3-4 November to discuss and lay out a roadmap for transformative solutions towards meeting these shared challenges. The two-day meeting takes place just before the Twenty-Seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (COP27) in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. It offers an opportunity for Ministers of Agriculture to discuss a shared vision of the role of the agriculture and food sector in addressing climate change, including how countries can shape the direction of future policies to ensure that their agriculture sectors contribute to reaching climate targets.

The opening session takes place on Thursday 3 November from 09:30 CET (08:30 GMT), and media can register via Zoom. High-level speakers will include:

Mr Mathias Cormann, Secretary-General, OECD

Ms Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Canada (Co-Chair)

Mr Damien O'Connor, Minister of Agriculture, for Biosecurity, and for Rural Communities, New Zealand (Co-Chair)

OECD Agriculture Ministers last met in April 2016, when they explored more holistic policies for agriculture and food systems, culminating in a Declaration. Requests for interviews or further information should be directed to the OECD Media Office (tel. +33 1 4524 9700). Working with over 100 countries, the OECD is a global policy forum that promotes policies to preserve individual liberty and improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world.

From <https://www.oecd.org/> 10/27/2022

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Digital Skills Critical for Jobs in Asia and the Pacific

Digital skills are increasing in demand in Asia and the Pacific, with 75% of employers in four countries reporting a rise in demand for new hires with digital skills over the last 5 years, according to a new joint report by the Asian Development Bank (ADB)

and LinkedIn. Launched today, Digital Jobs and Digital Skills: A Shifting Landscape in Asia and the Pacific highlights how basic digital literacy is now essential, and those with higher digital skills stand to benefit more. The study, which reveals that digital hiring has been highly resilient during the pandemic, is the result of a partnership between ADB and LinkedIn. The report provides relevant, data-driven insights for governments, industry, and the international community on shifts in the markets for jobs, skills, and credentials. "The digital economy in Asia and the Pacific is growing at great speed, with e-commerce expected to reach \$2 trillion by 2025. As digital transformation reshapes jobs in the region, there is an urgent need to invest in digital skills and talent," said ADB Sustainable Development and Climate Change Department Director General Bruno Carrasco. "As digital skills and credentials grow in prominence, we must ensure that education systems are helping to narrow the digital divide for disadvantaged or marginalized people—and not widening them."

Most employers in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, and the Philippines now consider digital skills such as proficiency with collaboration tools or basic internet skills for commerce as essential workplace skills, according to the survey. Advanced skills such as coding and programming are gaining ground. Employers surveyed required 8 of the last 10 candidates hired in the past year to possess at least basic digital literacy and skills, and 4 of the last 10 hires to have advanced digital skills. "The COVID-19 pandemic prompted a drastic change in how people work. Digital transformation drove demand for digital jobs and digital skills—and we know this will continue," said LinkedIn Vice-President, Regional General Counsel and Head of Public Policy, APAC, Dave Woodward. "It's critical for businesses to adopt a skills-based approach to hiring and developing talent. Workers must also cultivate a growth mindset and embrace lifelong learning. This is how we'll continue to create opportunities for every member of the global workforce."

While the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted labor markets, the study found increased demand for people with skills to help companies accelerate their digital transformation, and an unprecedented growth in online learning. Eighty-nine percent of survey respondents agreed that digital credentials will become a critical part of higher education. Most believed digital credentials will complement traditional qualifications and will be important for entry-level positions in key sectors. ADB partners with its developing member countries in Asia and Pacific to improve the quality of technical training institutions and skills development programs. The bank is aiming to expand its education operations from the current 5% of investments to about 10% by 2024.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 10/06/2022

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ADB's Office of Risk Management and Sustainable Development and Climate Change Department on Climate-related Financial Disclosures

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) recently published its first climate-financial disclosures report. The report provides an overview on progress made by the bank in implementing the TCFD Recommendations. It also presents future actions for further alignment. Stephen O'Leary, Head of the Office of Risk Management (ORM), and Bruno Carrasco, Director General concurrently Chief Compliance Officer of the Sustainable Development and Climate Change Department (SDCC), discuss ADB's role as the Asia and the Pacific's climate bank and share insights on the benefits of adopting the TCFD reporting framework.

What is the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD)?

Stephen O'Leary: The Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) was established in 2015 by the G20 Financial Stability Board (FSB). In 2017, the Task Force published Recommendations for the voluntary disclosure of climate-related financial information against two key risks: (i) Carbon transition risks or risks related to the transition to a lower-carbon economy and (ii) Physical climate risks or risks related to the physical impacts of climate change. The TCFD Recommendations are structured around four thematic areas that are core elements of how organizations operate: (i) Governance; (ii) Strategy; (iii) Risk management; and (iv) Metrics and targets. In November 2021, ADB declared its support to the TCFD, joining 3,400 organizations around the world to have done so.

How can the TCFD report benefit ADB in its role as Asia and the Pacific's climate bank?

Bruno Carrasco: Disclosing against the TCFD recommendations helps reinforce ADB's commitment as Asia and the Pacific's climate bank and emphasizes the importance of our investments in climate mitigation and adaptation. It sends a strong signal to all our stakeholders that ADB supports greater transparency around climate risks and opportunities. We hope that global movements toward climate-related financial disclosures, such as the TCFD, will lead national regulatory bodies to improve disclosure requirements for all types of organizations, particularly financial institutions, to support the gradual and orderly de-risking of the financial system from the impacts of climate change.

How does the climate-financial disclosures report fit with the Sustainability Report?

Bruno Carrasco: ADB's climate-financial disclosures report complements ADB's Sustainability Report. The Sustainability Report discloses ADB's footprint on people, the environment, and climate, while the climate-financial disclosures report discloses the ways that climate impacts the risks and opportunities of ADB's operations, organization, and clients.

What are ADB's strategies toward climate-related opportunities included in the report?

Bruno Carrasco: The strategy section of the TCFD report highlights a range of

initiatives that show how ADB has embedded climate change considerations in our day-to-day operations, from organizational strategies such as Strategy 2030 to operational approaches such as the 2021 Energy Policy and Country Partnership Strategies. The report highlights ADB's Energy Transition Mechanism which was launched in 2021 to help accelerate and finance the transition from fossil fuels to clean energy in a just and affordable manner. It also notes ADB's management of the ASEAN Catalytic Green Finance Facility (ACGF), which is a green financing vehicle that supports countries in Southeast Asia to prepare and finance infrastructure projects that promote environmental sustainability and contribute to climate change goals.

Can you share why TCFD reporting is an important risk management tool for ADB?
Stephen O'Leary: TCFD reporting has helped ADB review its processes for assessing and managing climate risks. ADB has in place a climate risk management framework for reviewing physical climate risks on all projects since 2014. For public sector lending, ADB's sovereign credit risk reviews now include an assessment of exposure to physical risks and carbon transition risks. For private sector lending, climate risk exposure is now reflected in a borrower's internal risk rating. ADB has also introduced limits to cap exposure to the fossil fuel energy sector, as well as climate-based filter criteria for treasury investments. The report also includes a heat map of ADB's exposure to physical and carbon transition risks using project industry sector and country-level analysis. This mapping will help inform ADB's risk management activities going forward.

How does TCFD disclosure help ADB consider its financial risks?
Stephen O'Leary: Adopting TCFD reporting also helps to strengthen ADB's "Environmental, Social, and Governance" (ESG) credentials. Climate financial risk analysis and ESG are becoming increasingly important considerations when external rating agencies assess credit ratings. While ADB is not a regulated institution, rating agencies and shareholders expect ADB to keep up with best practices in these areas. International supervisors, such as the Basel Committee and the G20's FSB, as well as regional and national regulators, have increased guidance on climate risk management and disclosures. ADB has aligned itself with expected standards and practices by taking the step to voluntarily disclose climate risks.

What are ADB's plans for the future of TCFD reporting?
Stephen O'Leary: ADB plans to continue improving its climate risk analysis and TCFD disclosures in the future, through the development of metrics relating to portfolio greenhouse gas emissions. ADB will also implement a more thorough analysis of carbon transition risks and better analyze the sites where its projects and counterparties are located to assess different physical climate risks. Establishing processes to ensure projects are aligned with the Paris Agreement will also assist in this regard. Climate change scenario analysis, and particularly the impact of carbon transition, will be one of the biggest areas for future work. We anticipate including

those results in our future TCFD reporting.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 10/11/2022

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Making Asia and the Pacific's Recovering Tourism Industry More People-centered and Sustainable

The COVID-19 pandemic hit global travel and tourism hard, as governments closed borders and restricted mobility to slow the spread of the virus. Tourist arrivals plunged by about 1 billion people, and millions of jobs in the industry evaporated. The sector is known for its many small businesses, which employ a high share of women, youth, and other vulnerable groups. Its recovery is a chance to put in place inclusive policies that can help these groups and make the industry more resilient to future crises. This idea motivated participants in the G20 Tourism Ministers meeting on 26 September. The meeting highlighted the importance of small businesses in transforming the industry in the wake of COVID-19. The participants adopted the G20 Bali Guidelines for Strengthening Communities and Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) as Tourism Transformation Agents. The guidelines list five pillars of a sustainable and inclusive tourist economy: climate action, women, youth empowerment, governance, and policy frameworks. Hosted under the 2022 Indonesian Presidency, the meeting marked the finale of almost a year of efforts. As part of these efforts, the G20 Tourism Working Group developed guidelines and urged policy action for G20 members and other countries, to help tourism recover. A summary of the discussions will be submitted to G20 Leaders at their meeting in November.

ADB and G20 tourism

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) participated as a member of the working group and contributed to the preparation of the Bali Guidelines document, led by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of Indonesia and the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). ADB also joined the ministerial meeting and shared insights on challenges, possible solutions, and the Bank's efforts to build an enabling environment for sustainable and inclusive tourism. The scars left by COVID-19 include a drop in international tourist arrivals from a high of 1.4 billion in 2019, to 409 million in 2020 and 446 million in 2021—a decline of about 70% for each year compared with 2019, according to the UNWTO. Tourism exports fell 60% in 2021 from \$1.7 billion in 2019, while tourism's share of gross domestic product dropped 41% in 2021 from \$3.5 trillion in 2019. Before COVID-19, tourism supported 195 million jobs directly and more than 330 million in total. The industry is largely made up of micro, small, and medium-sized businesses (MSMEs), which employ a high share of women and youth. The pandemic put some 100 million of these jobs at risk.

Tourism recovery and challenges

Tourism is expected to gradually recover in 2022, as economies continue easing travel restrictions. But this does not mean the industry is out of the woods. COVID-19 concerns will likely continue to influence travelers' decisions, especially when it comes to their perceptions of health, connectivity, and hygiene infrastructure. The industry may not be ready to accommodate a surge in demand for tourism after the long disruptions. In fact, operational snags and workforce challenges are already affecting airlines, which are the busiest they've been since 2020. A global economic slowdown, rising inflation and interest rates, and geopolitical conflicts pose additional risks for the tourism sector. The industry also needs to grapple with challenges it faced even before the pandemic, including narrow source markets, environmental damage from mass tourism, and connectivity issues. It is important for all participating countries to cooperate across borders to better monitor the footprint of tourist activities and promote decarbonization. A UNWTO survey in 19 countries found that the top challenge for MSMEs in the tourism industry was inadequate access to finance. A changing and uncertain market, and a lack of a trained workforce, were also significant concerns. A similar survey of communities emphasized uncertainty in the market as the biggest risk, followed by a lack of infrastructure, and identified the need for greater participation of local communities in tourism activities.

Tourism policy recommendations

The G20 meeting stressed the power of tourism to help realize an inclusive and sustainable recovery, through policies tailored to MSMEs and people involved in the sector. Centered on people and sustainability, these policies can help make the sector more resilient. The G20 Tourism Working Group recommends further discussion of skills development, including vocational education and lifelong learning; promotion of entrepreneurship, MSMEs and innovation; building relationships between the tourism sector and local communities; adoption of sustainable and environmentally friendly practices; and the systematic collection, analysis and dissemination of data to help guide policies. We need to rebuild tourism and restore the lifeline it offers to millions of people in Asia and the Pacific. In doing so, we need to ensure equitable community participation, make the sector more resilient, and meet climate and environmental objectives. To achieve this, international cooperation will be more important than ever. This article was prepared by Cyn-Young Park, Director, and Sanchita Basu Das, Economist, at ADB's Economic Research and Regional Cooperation Department.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 10/25/2022

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East Asia

CHINA: Digital Transformation Creates New Types of Employment

Digital transformation and technological innovation have brought about new

professions requiring new skills and knowledge in various industries amid China's endeavors to promote high-quality development. China has added 158 new professions to its list of recognized occupations since 2015, according to the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security. It started the revision work in April last year in order to update the edition released in 2015. This brings the total number of professions on the newly-revised list to 1,639, according to the ministry. Increased digital waves have affected the labor market in a variety of ways, for example, providing more types of work. The revised list identifies 97 professions related to the digital sectors. The move is designed to meet the employment demand of the booming digital economy and support its development, especially in technological innovation and talent team construction, said Wu Liduo, director of a technical guidance center for employment training of the ministry.

A program has been launched to provide training for digital technology engineers, which covers about 80,000 people every year, said Li Jinsheng, an official with the ministry. China's digital economy grew at an average rate of 15.9 percent from 2012 to 2021. During the period, the share of the digital economy in its GDP expanded from 20.9 percent to 39.8 percent, representing an annual average increase of about 2.1 percentage points, according to a white paper on global digital economy released by the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology. The latest edition of the list also features professions within the country's emerging industries such as cryptographic engineering, carbon management and financial technology. By adding the new types of jobs to the list, it is expected to boost the development of related industries, increase employment, and strengthen vocational education and training.

In 1999, China published its first reference book on occupational classifications. In 2010, China started revising the reference book by adding new types of work and published the revised edition of the reference book in 2015. The ministry said efforts have been made to formulate national standards for new professions and launch occupational training courses to cultivate more talent. China has increased spending from its general public budget on improving people's livelihoods and keeping the job market stable this year. Expenditure on social security and employment totaled 2.53 trillion yuan (about 365.05 billion U.S. dollars) in the first eight months of 2022, up 6.6 percent year on year, data from the Ministry of Finance showed.

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China Launches Database, Book Series Recording Endeavors to Build Moderately Prosperous Society

A database and book series recording China's endeavors to complete the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects have been launched. The ensemble offers a panoramic and multi-dimensional view of how the Communist Party of China

(CPC) led the Chinese people to achieve the goals of poverty alleviation and building a moderately prosperous society in all respects. It records major decisions and plans made by Party committees and governments at all levels, as well as pivotal moments, role models and major events in the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects, especially those after the 18th National Congress of the CPC in 2012. It also shows the significant achievements and transformations across urban and rural areas and from people from various walks of life. The database's portal, www.jiluxiaokang.com, is now open to the public.

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Sparing No Effort to Ensure China's Grain Security

As the world embraces the 42nd World Food Day, China, the world's most populous country, is making every effort to ensure grain supply amid growing uncertainties in global food security. Food security is among the country's most fundamental interests, said Chinese President Xi Jinping. To ensure food security, he has on different occasions stressed farmland protection and improvement, development of seed industry, collection and protection of germplasm resources, as well as supporting farmers and agriculture in all ways possible.

PROTECTING, IMPROVING QUALITY OF FARMLAND

China needs to feed nearly one-fifth of the global population with only 9 percent of the world's arable land. To the president, protecting and improving the quality of farmland means a lot, in order to fill Chinese people's rice bowls, mainly with Chinese grain. Xi has said that farmland is the lifeline of grain production and the foundation of the sustainable development of the Chinese nation, and urged the implementation of the strictest possible system for farmland protection. To ensure the country's farmland area remains above the red line of 1.8 billion mu (about 120 million hectares), China has basically formed a legal system for farmland protection, including related provisions in its civil code and criminal law. At the annual central rural work conference in 2020, Xi stressed the importance of developing high-standard farmland to secure high and stable yields despite droughts and floods. Through a decade-long endeavor, the country's high-quality farmland will have reached 1 billion mu by the end of 2022, with a stable grain production capacity of over 500 billion kilograms.

INCREASING GRAIN PRODUCTION WITH TECHNOLOGY

To ensure food security from the source, Xi has made special emphasis on the seed industry. During an April visit to a seed laboratory in Sanya, Hainan Province, he said seed resources must be "firmly held in our own hands" to ensure food security. He stressed efforts to achieve self-reliance in seed technology and ensure that China's seed resources are self-supporting and under better control. Under his leadership, the country has made progress in collecting and protecting germplasm resources

and building seed banks, while making breakthroughs in seed breeding and selection as well as in the research and development of cutting-edge breeding technology. So far, the number of national seed breeding and production bases in China has increased to 216, official data showed. These hubs breed or produce seeds for grain, cotton, oil and sugar, among others. With the help of technology, China's grain production has undergone structural upgrade. Over the past decade, the comprehensive mechanization rates of wheat, corn and rice production have exceeded 97 percent, 90 percent and 85 percent, respectively. Supported by technological innovations, Chinese farmers can now install small weather stations and soil moisture meters in their fields, supervise crops through mobile applications, and use intelligent tractors and agricultural drones in farming.

SUPPORTING FARMERS IN MULTIPLE WAYS

To ensure food security, Xi has also urged efforts to implement all supportive policies, protect farmers' enthusiasm for their work, and improve incomes from food production. Over the past decade, a string of policies have been introduced to bring more benefits to grain planters. China has steadily raised the minimum purchase prices for rice and wheat, provided subsidies for grain planters, and introduced cost and income insurances for major grain producers in main production areas. The country has encouraged the development of family farms and farming cooperatives. In recent years, over 78 million farming households have received support from more than 950,000 socialized agricultural services organizations. This year, 40 billion yuan (about 5.63 billion U.S. dollars) has been allocated from the central government budget to ease the impact of agricultural material price rises, agricultural specialists have been sent to fields to assist farms, and various government agencies have strengthened consultations, early warning and disaster relief for floods and droughts.

As an epitome of China's agricultural infrastructure construction, water conservancy projects have seen rapid development. 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, accounting for 54 percent of the country's arable land and producing 75 percent of the country's grain. With hardwork on all fronts, China's grain output had topped 650 billion kilograms for seven consecutive years by 2021, with the per capita grain supply remaining higher than the internationally recognized security line. This year, China has seen output increases in summer grain and early rice and is expecting another bumper harvest. Such achievement didn't come easily as the country has overcome the impact of last year's rare autumn floods in the north, the late sowing of winter wheat in large areas and sporadic resurgences of COVID-19 cases, and coped with severe heat and droughts in some southern regions.

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China to Levy Consumption Tax on E-cigarettes

China will levy a consumption tax on electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) from Nov. 1, 2022, the country's Ministry of Finance announced Tuesday. The tax rate for the production and import of e-cigarettes is set at 36 percent, while that for wholesale business is 11 percent, the ministry said in a statement jointly released with the General Administration of Customs and State Taxation Administration. The move aims to improve the consumption tax system and give better play to its role of encouraging healthy consumption, according to the statement. To strengthen supervision over e-cigarettes, China issued a regulation for the industry earlier this year, which imposed license management for e-cigarette production, wholesale and retail entities, and banned setting up e-cigarette sales outlets near schools.

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China Unveils Measures to Promote Manufacturing-focused Foreign Investment

Chinese authorities have issued a slew of measures to facilitate foreign investment in the country with a focus on the manufacturing sector. China will optimize the investment environment and deepen the implementation of the negative list for foreign investment to transform opening-up policies into concrete projects, according to a document jointly released by the National Development and Reform Commission and five other government organs. The document urged facilitating the entry and exit of executives, technicians, and their families of multinationals and foreign-invested firms to the country, under the premise of sound COVID-19 pandemic prevention and control. Concerning manufacturing development, China will support the imports and exports of foreign-invested manufacturing firms and offer services and guidance on trade and customs clearance, according to the document. Efforts will also be made to improve the structure of foreign investment. The document encouraged foreign investors to expand their footprints in fields such as sci-tech innovation, and carbon peaking and neutrality, as well as in areas with a sound foundation of industrial development in China's central, western and northeastern regions.

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China to Accelerate Building Carbon Emission Calculation System

China's Ministry of Ecology and Environment said Thursday that it would expedite the construction of a unified and standardized national system to calculate carbon emissions. Focusing on sectors, companies and key products in the calculation, the ministry and relevant departments will also formulate a list of greenhouse gases, said

Li Gao, a ministry official, at a press conference. Li said amid China's green shift, the national carbon trading market, which opened in July last year, had operated in an orderly manner, with structure and rules established and expectations met. As of Oct. 21, the total transaction volume of the market reached 8.58 billion yuan (about 1.2 billion U.S. dollars), said the official. The ministry will ramp up data quality management, strengthen the functions of the market, and optimize the country's certified emissions reduction mechanism to help the market thrive, Li added. China has announced that it will strive to peak carbon dioxide emissions by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060.

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Solar Energy-rich City Accelerates Green Development

On the southern fringes of the Tengger Desert, the fourth largest desert in China, a sea of photovoltaic panels glinted blue in the sun. While watering desert plants underneath the panels with a height of 4 meters in a photovoltaic power base, Feng Xuexi, 62, said "it is amazing I can sometimes sit in the shade and enjoy the cool in the desert." Feng, a villager in Ronghua Xincun Village of Wuwei City, northwest China's Gansu Province, recently started to work in the photovoltaic power base, which is located in the north of Wuwei. As soon as Feng came there, he was surprised by the upgraded approach to desertification control, which integrates solar power generation, planting, breeding, and industrial tourism. Wuwei is located in the southern edge of the Tengger Desert. Local people have spent decades of years fighting desertification.

Every spring and autumn, when the sand whirls frequently, Feng, together with his fellow villagers, will volunteer to join in the activities -- placing straw checkerboard barriers -- to battle the desertification. In recent years, China has set its sights on new energy in the desert and Gobi areas and schemed to establish a series of large-scale wind power and photovoltaic bases in these areas. Wuwei, therefore, catches the opportunity to transform abundant solar energy into green development potential. The photovoltaic power base where Feng is working is China's first batch of projects in desert areas. Different from the floor stand of the traditional photovoltaic panel, the project in Wuwei uses cement columns to support a set of photovoltaic panels that spans 33 meters in length, according to Yin Heping with Elion Resources Group, which undertakes the construction of the project.

"In this way, we can improve power generation efficiency by 8 percent to 15 percent as well as reserve space for farm machinery," said Yin. Yin also noted that they have installed a water-saving system consisting of drip and spray irrigation equipment and monitoring probes around the desert plants. So far, the project has planted 80,000 pinus sylvestris and placed 21,000 mu (1,400 hectares) of straw and reed checkerboard barriers in the photovoltaic power station area. "Some of the grass has

grown to the height of my calves in two months, and it's hard to believe it can grow so rapidly in the desert," Feng said. "Later, the output value per mu is expected to reach 4,000 yuan (about 558 U.S. dollars) as *cistanche deserticola*, a traditional Chinese herbal medicine, can be grafted on the desert plant rootstocks planted within the straw checkerboard," Yin said.

According to Sun Tao, a researcher at Gansu Desert Control Research Institute, developing the photovoltaic industry in the desert has positive effects on ecological protection, like collecting rainfall, reducing soil surface temperature, and improving soil moisture. "People can take advantage of the improved soil to grow plants or cultivate poultry underneath the panels. There will be a win-win result of protecting the ecology while gaining revenues," Sun said. After the completion of the project, it is expected to annually generate 900 million kilowatt-hours of electricity, saving 280,000 tonnes of standard coal and reducing 740,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions, said Li Zhenhai, deputy director of the Wuwei municipal development and reform commission.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 10/28/2022

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Emerging Industries Breathe New Life into Old Revolutionary Bases

Nestled deep in the Taihang Mountains, the Huangyadong area once lagged behind in development due to isolation, but it has since embarked on a new development path, with locals engaged in red tourism. Located in Licheng County of Changzhi City, north China's Shanxi Province, the Huangyadong area is famous for a former arsenal site founded by the Eighth Route Army, which was led by the Communist Party of China during the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. "Tourists' appetites for history and revolutionary stories have increased significantly," said local farmer Li Yungang, who jumped on the red tourism bandwagon in 2006 and runs an agritainment business in Huangyadong. Li has seen a growing number of visitors pouring into Huangyadong to learn about red culture. "I can offer over 50 rooms and gain a monthly income of more than 300,000 yuan (about 41,801 U.S. dollars) in peak season," said Li.

Over the years, the Huangyadong site has been developed into a national 4A scenic spot, the second-highest rating in a five-level assessment system for the country's scenic areas. The vitality of the Huangyadong area is the epitome of efforts made by Licheng's government in recent years to fully utilize its 521 revolutionary sites to develop red tourism around the county, with investments totaling nearly 10 billion yuan. With a slew of major red tourism projects developed by the local government, Licheng County saw 636,000 tourist trips in the first nine months of this year, according to the county's culture and tourism bureau. From January to September 2022, the tourism sector produced extra income for over 1,300 households in

Licheng, the bureau said. In addition to tourism, other emerging industries have also promoted the development of old revolutionary bases in Shanxi Province.

After a downpour, visitors surprisingly found that there was no ponding on some streets of Wuxiang County, known as "the headquarters of the Eighth Route Army" in Changzhi City. These streets are paved with a new type of permeable brick, which is produced by a local environmental protection technology company. "High-performance permeable bricks are among urgent demands for reducing waterlogging in urban areas," said Hao Jinting, chairman of the company, adding that their bricks with high permeability and freezing resistance had been applied in some 30 cities nationwide. Heavy reliance on the coal industry once hampered the development of Wuxiang. In recent years, the county has ramped up efforts to boost emerging industries and help a batch of traditional enterprises accelerate transformation and upgrading. Nearly half of the 29 industrial firms with annual main business revenue of at least 20 million yuan in Wuxiang are not related to coal mining.

Among them, six are involved in emerging industries, including photovoltaic and wind power generation, as well as equipment manufacturing, said Wu Wei, deputy director of the local bureau of industry and information technology. Li Xiaobing, head of a calcium company in Wuxiang, has for over a decade witnessed the company transforming its business from quarrying to producing nano calcium carbonate -- a new material. "It can be used as raw material for making paper, plastic, and rubber," Li Xiaobing said, adding that the first phase of a nano calcium carbonate production line with an annual output of 50,000 tonnes will be put into operation at the end of this year. The flourishing emerging industries in Licheng and Wuxiang counties are fruits of a raft of support policies launched by China in recent years to boost the development of its old revolutionary bases. In early 2021, China's State Council issued a document setting development goals for old revolutionary base areas in the new era. By 2025, old revolutionary base areas are to reach higher levels of rural vitalization and a new type of urbanization.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 10/31/2022

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JAPAN: Govt Calls for Pay Hikes Reflecting Rising Prices

The Japanese government Tuesday called for the realization of wage hikes commensurate with inflation in the "shunto" labor-management wage negotiations next spring. Ahead of the compilation of a comprehensive economic package this month, the government picked key items for the package at a meeting of its panel to realize a "new form of capitalism," chaired by Prime Minister Fumio Kishida. "I want labor and management to hold negotiations toward a goal of realizing wage hikes that can cover rising prices, while taking into account each company's situation," Kishida told the meeting held at the prime minister's office. In order to create an

environment allowing smaller companies to pass on higher costs to their product and service prices appropriately and raise wages, the panel released a plan to disclose the names of companies that repeatedly and unfairly refuse price hikes by suppliers and subcontractors. It was also decided that the government will use labor standards inspection offices to make sure that companies abide by the principle of equal pay for equal work, as part of efforts to improve employment conditions for nonregular workers.

From <https://www.nippon.com> 10/04/2022

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Japan to Abolish Health Insurance Cards by 2024, Integrate with 'My Number'

The Japanese government plans to abolish health insurance cards in the fall of 2024 by integrating them into "My Number" ID cards. Digital Transformation Minister Kono Taro made the announcement on Thursday after a discussion with Prime Minister Kishida Fumio, health minister Kato Katsunobu and internal affairs minister Terada Minoru. Kono said My Number cards will serve as something like a passport to the creation of a new digital society. The government is considering what steps to take regarding citizens who do not obtain My Number cards by the time health insurance cards are abolished, other than to continue to urge them to apply for one. Kono added the government will move up its initial targeted date of March 2025 for combining driver's license functions with My Number cards. The government aims for almost all citizens to obtain My Number cards by the end of March next year. But only 56 percent had applied for a card as of Tuesday.

From <https://www3.nhk.or.jp> 10/13/2022

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Japan to Allow Wage Payments to Digital Wallets from April

Japan is planning to start allowing companies to pay wages to digital payment apps like PayPay and Rakuten Pay from April, the labor ministry said Wednesday, in a bid to promote cashless payments as a way to stimulate the economy. The maximum balance of such digital wallets will be set to 1 million yen, with employees able to use the funds to make purchases or remittances directly. The upper limit was determined amid concerns that app users cannot be protected sufficiently. Unlike banks, operators of the apps are not subject to the nation's deposit insurance system, which covers principal of up to 10 million yen in case of bankruptcy. The ministry on Wednesday approved a draft revision to a relevant ordinance. While the revised ordinance is expected to come into effect in April, its implementation is unlikely to begin until several months later. Screening of app operators must be completed first, and companies considering digital wage payments also have to obtain consent from employees, the ministry said. The operators will be required to immediately transfer balances exceeding 1 million yen to bank accounts and to fully compensate losses

incurred due to bankruptcy or unauthorized transactions, among other conditions.

From <https://japantoday.com> 10/27/2022

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Japan to Raise Health Insurance Premiums for High-Income Elderly

Japan's health ministry Friday proposed raising the upper limit on health insurance premiums paid by high-income earning people aged 75 years or older from 660,000 yen per year at present. The ministry also proposed raising the share of health insurance premiums paid by all people aged 75 years or older from 10 pct at present. The remaining 90 pct is currently covered by payments from working generations and taxpayer money. The proposed reform is designed to ease the burden on working generations while making the country's health care system sustainable as medical expenses are expected to grow further due to an aging and declining population. Under the reform, the amount of contributions paid by major companies' health insurance societies to medical expenses on people aged between 65 and 74 years will be raised. The ministry separately proposed raising the upper limit on premiums under the "kokumin kenko hoken" national health insurance program paid by high-income earners by 20,000 yen to 1.04 million yen per year in fiscal 2023, which starts next April. The sum includes nursing care insurance premiums.

From <https://www.nippon.com> 10/28/2022

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SOUTH KOREA: To Extend Support for 'Strategic' High-Tech Materials, Parts

South Korea decided to put more key technologies related to major materials, parts and equipment on its list for special management and support in a move to better ensure stable supply chains and to promote advanced industry sectors, the industry ministry said Tuesday. Following Japan's exports curbs of key materials bound for Seoul in 2019, the government here has designated a total of 100 "key strategic technologies" related to semiconductors, displays, electronics and vehicles, among other sectors, and has extended various forms of support. During a related committee meeting earlier in the day, the government decided to expand the list to involve a total of 150 items related to advanced, future industries, according to the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy. "We've mostly focused on how to respond to Japan's export restrictions. But now is the time to redesign the scheme beyond the issue to more effectively deal with fast-changing global supply chain situations, such as the prolonged Russia-Ukraine war and the heated Sino-U.S. competition over the global technology hegemony," ministry official Joo Young-jun said. Since Japan's exports curbs, South Korea's dependence on Japanese materials and parts has decreased to hit an all-time low in the first half of this year.

"South Korea has been proactively coping with the supply-chain crisis of materials, parts, and equipment sparked by Japan's export curbs in 2019," Finance Minister Choo Kyung-ho said during the meeting. "As a result, we have achieved a meaningful progress by reducing our dependence on key products from Japan." South Korea's dependence on Japan for 100 major products came to 24.9 percent in 2021, down from 30.9 percent tallied in 2019, according to the finance ministry. But the country's dependence on imports from China grew 29.6 percent in the first half from 24.9 percent in 2012, according to government data. Calls have grown in South Korea for reducing reliance on China, particularly after the country suffered a supply shortage of urea, a key industrial material, late last year, following Beijing's export restrictions to ease its domestic supply bottlenecks. Among the 100 technologies on the list, the government took out 13 items and added 63 new ones related to chips, displays, and bio sectors, after consultations with experts and government and industry officials, the ministry said. "We plan to establish an ecosystem of cooperation led by the private sector, and build a monitoring system that can preemptively track signs of crisis in the global supply chain without disruption," Choo said.

From <https://en.yna.co.kr> 10/18/2022

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PM Vows to Achieve Carbon Neutrality

Prime Minister Han Duck-soo said Thursday that the government will "minutely adjust" energy policies to help achieve its target of reaching carbon neutrality by 2050. "The goal of carbon neutrality is audacious and challenging, but the implementation process that underpins it must be very reasonable and feasible," Han told a conference on carbon neutrality. To achieve the goal of carbon neutrality, Han said the government will "minutely adjust its energy policy direction and plans to reduce greenhouse gases." Han said the world is at a grave risk from climate change and warned that responding to climate change "is not an option but a necessity." South Korea will also help emerging economies reduce greenhouse gases, Han said. The government has pledged to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent from the 2018 levels by 2030 and reach carbon neutrality by 2050.

From <https://en.yna.co.kr> 10/20/2022

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Gov't, Ruling Party Vow to Step Up Fight Against Drugs

The government and the ruling People Power Party (PPP) pledged Wednesday to significantly bolster efforts to tackle ever-growing drug use, officials said. The PPP and the government held a policy consultation meeting at the National Assembly and discussed various measures to prevent people from abusing substances and provide help to those suffering from drug addiction. "Our party and the government will put in all-out efforts to completely eradicate drugs from people's daily lives and become a

drug-free country once again," PPP's top policymaker Sung Il-jong said, noting that drug abuse and crimes have become a serious threat to society. From January to August, a total of 12,233 people have been apprehended on drug charges, up 14.5 percent from the same period of last year, according to officials. The number of teenage drug offenders jumped from 41 in 2011 to 450 in 2021.

Sung also called for a more advanced system to respond to evolving drug crimes and an improvement in social awareness on the matter. "The prime minister's office will become a control tower to push for strong drug investigations at an interagency level, launch an information sharing system to respond to advancing drug distribution and strengthen addiction treatment and prevention education," policy coordination minister Bang Moon-kyu said. The prosecution will operate a special task force against drug offenses for a year, while police, the coast guard and other related authorities will expand cooperation and their capacity to crack down on such crimes, officials said. The government and the ruling party also agreed to push for legislation of a bill that stipulates doctors check a patient's prescription history of addictive medicinal drugs, such as fentanyl, before prescribing them.

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S. Korea's Science Minister Vows to Build State-Run Biofoundry

South Korea's science minister on Thursday unveiled plans to build a state-run biofoundry, an integrated biomanufacturing platform, in a bid to expand the country's presence in the prominent sector. "We will create a biofoundry, where designing and manufacturing vaccines and medicine take place simultaneously," Lee Jong-ho, the minister of science and ICT, said in a governmental meeting chaired by President Yoon Suk-yeol, adding the bioindustry has a large global market and can create many jobs. A biofoundry refers to facilities that offer integrated tools of biological engineering, data analysis and scaled-up processes for biomanufacturing. "South Korea's share in the world biomarket reaches 2 percent, but we will raise the number to a double digit within 10 years," he said. "A state-run biofoundry is necessary to achieve the goal." The minister also said the government strives to help South Korea, the world's biggest memory chip producer, grow as the world's No. 1 country in the market for low-power artificial intelligence chips. "South Korea's AI market is currently worth 2.2 trillion won (US\$1.5 billion), and the government will help the market treble within five years," he added.

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Yoon Vows to Invest 25 Trn Won in Fostering 12 Nat'l Strategic Skills

President Yoon Suk-yeol pledged Friday to invest 25 trillion won (US\$17.6 billion)

over five years in developing 12 "national strategic skills," such as those related to semiconductors and rechargeable batteries, to help put South Korea ahead of the rest of the world. Yoon made the remark as he presided over the first meeting of the Presidential Advisory Council on Science and Technology since his inauguration, calling science and technology the "source" of economic and industrial growth. "Based on our plans to foster national strategic skills, which we are announcing today, we must take a bigger leap to become a science and technology powerhouse," he said at the meeting held at the presidential office. "We will invest over 25 trillion won over the next five years in R&D for the national strategic skills, secure super-first-class and super-leading skills, and produce concrete results by pursuing public-private projects in the national strategic skills," he added.

The 12 skills adopted at the meeting include those related to semiconductors and displays, rechargeable batteries, advanced mobility, next generation nuclear power, and advanced biology. The presidential office said that by fostering such skills South Korea is expected to emerge as one of the world's top five technological powerhouses. "If we live well and study properly, this will increase freedoms for the people of the Republic of Korea and also of the world," Yoon said. "Science and technology are directly linked to the expansion of such freedoms."

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Ruling Party Vows to Improve Nat'l Safety Net Following Itaewon Tragedy

The ruling People Power Party (PPP) vowed Friday to double check and improve safety infrastructure after more than 150 people were killed in a crowd crush in Seoul over the weekend. The tragedy happened Saturday night when a massive crowd of Halloween partygoers packed a narrow 3.2-meter-wide alley in Seoul's entertainment district of Itaewon and some of them fell over. At least 154 people were killed, and 33 others remain in serious condition. "It is the responsibility of the government and the political circle now to come up with measures to prevent similar accidents from happening ever again," PPP chief Chung Jin-suk said, vowing to find ways to improve the country's safety infrastructure to the level of a developed nation and secure proper budget for the work. Chung also called on people to refrain from stigmatizing or delivering hate comments on victims, and police officers and firefighters who were at the scene, saying it is time to "mourn." "Please wait and see how the government handles the accident, find out the cause and devise support measures with mature civic consciousness," Chung said.

The main opposition Democratic Party (DP) also said dealing with the aftermath of the accident and mourning are the top priorities at the moment, promising to cooperate with the ruling bloc to overcome the accident. "We will work hard with hope that people suffering from the tragedy can heal up fast and restore their mental

peace," DP leader Lee Jae-myung said. Lee called on the government to put in all-out efforts to cope with the tragedy without attempting to evade responsibility, apparently referring to remarks made by the interior minister. Minister Lee Sang-min has come under criticism after he said in a government briefing that this year's Halloween crowd in Itaewon was not "worryingly large" compared with previous years and the police force was scattered due to riots and demonstrations across the capital on the same day. DP floor leader Park Hong-geun also said many believe it was a man-made disaster and there should be an investigation into why it happened and whether necessary safety measures were taken. On Friday, leadership of the ruling and main opposition parties visited mourning altars for the victims set up at Seoul Plaza in central Seoul and Itaewon Plaza, located near the site of the accident.

From <https://en.yna.co.kr> 10/31/2022

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South-East Asia

THAILAND: To Tackle Gun, Drug Issues After Mass Shooting

The Thai government announced on Wednesday that gun and drug control became a national agenda following a mass shooting in northeastern Thailand last week. Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha told a press briefing Wednesday that he will be chairing a new committee in an effort to tackle the country's illicit drugs and firearms abuse. Measures such as strengthening law enforcement on gun control from licensing and bearing and reviewing relevant laws are the primary scope of the committee, Prayut said. "The government has taken the prevention and suppression of illicit drugs seriously and from a holistic perspective," he said. Interior Minister Anupong Paochinda shared some details about the gun control measures, which include tightening of gun licensing and crackdown on illegal possession of firearms. Anupong also ordered the authorities to combat the supply chains of drug trafficking and further promote rehabilitation programs for addicts. "When the supply runs out, the chances of people getting into drugs will be lower," he said. A mass shooting at a childcare center in northeastern Thailand's Nong Bua Lamphu province last Thursday has led to at least 37 deaths, most of them children. The 34-year-old attacker was a former police officer who had been involved in drug abuse before and was fired from the force over drug allegations.

From <https://english.news.cn/> 10/12/2022

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VIETNAM: To Improve Science and Technology Market to Reduce Reliance on Imports

Việt Nam plans to focus on improving the science and technology market with the establishment of three trading platforms in order to reduce reliance on imports, Minister of Science and Technology Huỳnh Thành Đạt has said. Đạt pointed out that

there was a huge demand for technology among Vietnamese enterprises and improving the science and technology market was crucial to improve the competitiveness of enterprises. Accordingly, a key solution would be the establishment and operation of three technology trading platforms in the country's three regions which would be connected with local and regional platforms, he said. Việt Nam currently remained heavily reliant on the import of technologies and equipment. The Ministry of Science and Technology pointed out that the science and technology market in Việt Nam was still in its infancy with limited domestic supply. The supply for the science and technology market mainly came from research and development at institutes, universities, technology incubation centres, enterprises as well as through technology import and transfer from abroad. A survey showed that only 16 per cent of enterprises regarded institutes and universities of Việt Nam as suppliers of science and technology products.

According to statistics of the General Statistics Office and the General Department of Customs, Việt Nam spent around US\$40 billion in buying technologies, equipment and machinery in 2020, 1.5 times higher than 2016. The ministry cited statistics that about 75 per cent of technologies and equipment of Vietnamese firms were imported. While the import from the US, the Republic of Korea and the European Unions saw slight increases in recent years, Việt Nam was dependent of the import from developing countries with low and medium technology levels. The domestic supply remained limited while many research results of domestic institutes and universities had not been transferred or were not yet ready to be applied in production and business, the ministry said. The demand for technology and equipment of enterprises in Việt Nam increased rapidly in recent years but it remained difficult for them to access supply of high-quality technologies coupled with limited supply in technology absorption and capacity.

There was a lack of attention to increasing the capacity of intermediary organisations which provided consultancies, brokerage services, promotion and technology transfer. The ministry said that national trading platforms would be established and act as intermediaries to connect supply and demand in the science and technology market, commercialise research and development results and provide support to promoting science and technology products. Investment would be poured into developing a database and a portal about the science and technology markets. There were about 800 intermediary organisations operating in the science and technology market, including technology transfer promotion centres, evaluation centres and incubators. Besides, it was necessary to establish channels to import advanced technologies in the world with priority placed on technologies from developed countries. The national science and technology market development programme by 2030 stressed the importance of investing and developing the national technology trading platforms in Hà Nội, HCM City and Đà Nẵng.

From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 10/04/2022

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Mining Sector Must Push for Greater Implementation of Technology

Việt Nam must prioritise the development of its mining sector with a focus on the implementation of science and technology, particularly digitalisation, said researchers and industry leaders during a conference held Tuesday in Hà Nội. The mining sector plays a key role in supplying the country's other sectors with raw materials, especially for Việt Nam as a developing nation, according to Prof. Bùi Xuân Nam, deputy dean of the Hanoi University of Mining and Geology. Nam said the development of the sector remained a must-do step in the country's process of modernisation and industrialisation, and digitalisation should be made an integral part for its potential to quickly transform and further the sector's objectives. Tee Boon Teong, CEO of Informa Markets Việt Nam, stressed the importance of the sector and its contribution to Việt Nam's socio-economic development. He said in future projections the Southeast Asian economy will require an additional 10 per cent of electricity from now until 2030. However, the country continued to rely on its coal-fired power plants, which in total supplied 46 per cent of its energy needs in 2022, projected to jump to 56 per cent in 2030.

The number of coal-fired power plants in Việt Nam is set to rise from 32 in 2020 to 51 in 2050 with a projected input of 129 million tonnes of coal, which will only be partly met by some 200 coal mines across the country. While the development of greener energy sources including wind and solar power has shown some progress, economic growth will likely outpace energy production. In a near future, it can be a challenging task to reduce reliance on coal if Việt Nam is to stay committed to its carbon emission pledges in the future. The only path forward, therefore, is to focus on the development and implementation of environmentally-conscious science and technology, according to Tee. Dr. Lê Tiến Dũng from the university, however, said the implementation of modern science and technology has not been widespread, mostly limited to theoretical models and lacking in practical applications. He cited a number of reasons including a shortfall in rigorous technical requirements in mine designs and operations, relatively high cost of industrial design software, sub-par skilled labour and management capacity. He urged policymakers to focus on the building of technical standards made to specifications of Việt Nam's geographical conditions, the modernisation of mining operations, mine designs and additional training for the labour force.

Shane Dolmaschenz from Deswil, an Australia-based mining consulting and technology company, said more attention should be placed on limiting the environmental impacts of the industry such as damage to the water sources, the soil, the air and the ecosystem. In addition, regulations and standards should be updated to better protect workers' health and that of the nearby communities, live up to international management standards and ensure sustainable development of the

industry. Management must be required to constantly update and feed their mining data to regulators as a basis to form operational decisions. In addition, participants at the event voiced their concerns over the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the sector. During the first seven months of 2021, the sector Index of Industrial Production was reported to drop by 6.3 per cent compared to the same period in the previous year. The sector has also been said to have a myriad of problems in improving productivity and efficient usage of resources.

From <https://vietnamnews.vn> 10/06/2022

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Ministries Work to Ensure Petrol Supply and Maintain Operation at Retail Stations

The Ministry of Industry and Trade and the Ministry of Finance said they would raise the price of fuel from today (October 11) to help increase commissions for retailers to ensure supply at retail stations nationwide. The move came following petrol retailers across the country complaining about petrol retail prices, saying they are so low that retailers are losing money. The retailers had also submitted a complaint to PM Phạm Minh Chính, saying suppliers had been charging them higher costs while retailers had to sell fuel at the government mandated price, which the two ministries had been decreasing. They said fuel price controls go against market principles and cause many stations to suffer losses or shut down.

Stable supply

The finance ministry said it is important to ensure domestic supply of petrol in all circumstances, adding that one of the reasons for the problem is a drop in gasoline imports. Gasoline imports in the third quarter fell by 40 per cent from the second quarter, and diesel imports fell by 35 per cent. Only 19 out of 33 suppliers imported gasoline, the ministry said. In a related move, the General Department of Market Surveillance has ordered its agencies in provinces and cities nationwide to enhance supervision of petrol firms to ensure sufficient domestic supply. Over the past few days, a number of petrol stations in HCM City and the provinces of Đồng Nai, Bình Dương, Cần Thơ, An Giang, Bình Phước and Đắk Lắk have suspended selling fuel or are selling small quantities. In HCM City, as many as 54 gas stations said they were out of fuel since suppliers had not delivered it and not even indicated when they would do so. The HCM City Department of Industry and Trade, which oversees gas stations in the city, said it would announce a list of 500 gas stations that are still operational. On Sunday night, Petrolimex, the country's largest fuel trading firm, mobilised up to 80 tank trucks to transport gasoline to gas stations under its retail system to make up for shortfalls faced by other fuel retailers.

From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 10/11/2022

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President Asks HCM City to Quickly Address Urgent Issues

President Nguyễn Xuân Phúc asked HCM City to promptly solve urgent issues that have drawn a great deal of public attention, especially those related to urban planning, during his working session with leaders of the municipal People's Committee on Thursday. The President said the city's position as a growth engine for the southern region and the whole country is gradually declining due to its falling growth rate. Meanwhile, technical and social infrastructure is increasingly inadequate compared to the requirements of the new stage of development, especially planning. Traffic infrastructure is more overloaded, with insufficient effort exerted at reducing traffic jams and flooding. In addition, the city has recorded a low disbursement rate of public investment. "Ensuring stability and good control of the macro-economy has great importance for a mega-city with a large population like HCM City," he said. He asked the city to continue supporting labour training, while restoring and developing the business sector, and regularly holding dialogues with enterprises to help them address difficulties. The city must create favourable conditions for businessmen to contribute more to the city's process of building and developing a smart city. "Residents in the city are under more severe inflation pressure than those in other localities, so it is necessary to pay more attention to programmes, projects and initiatives which serve social welfare and assist vulnerable groups," he said. The city needs to continue to reform both policies and public services to make positive changes in the business environment. Improving policies and infrastructure related to digital platforms and innovation, as well as developing a digital economy, green economy, and circular economy are also needed, he said. A new policy is needed to help the city develop quickly and sustainably in the coming time. The President agreed that a new policy framework will help the city quickly remove its bottlenecks in infrastructure, congestion, flooding, and environmental pollution.

From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 10/15/2022

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PM Orders Accelerated Public Investment Disbursement in Final Months of the Year

Prime Minister Phạm Minh Chính has ordered ministries and agencies to step up public investment disbursement in the implementation of three key national target programmes in the remaining months of 2022. The cabinet leader issued a directive on accelerating public investment disbursement on Monday with the task of disbursing an enormous amount of public investment in the last few months of the year. In the first nine months of 2022, about VNĐ35 trillion of public investment has been disbursed, increasing by 16 per cent compared to last year, covering 46.7 per cent of the workload assigned by the PM this year. According to the Ministry of Planning and Investment, the public investment disbursement workload in 2022 is heavy. This is because the amount of capital that needs to be disbursed is about VNĐ80 trillion, higher than in 2021, and not including about VNĐ38 trillion in extra development expenditure from the recovery and socio-economic development

programmes. However, the PM said in the decree that public investment speed has fallen short of expectations due to several shortcomings. Shortcomings in the decree include a lack of responsibility at ministerial and provincial level leaders, unfinished land clearance work and low-quality supervision.

According to the directive, accelerating public investment to realise annual socio-economic targets is one of the key tasks in the year's final months. The target is to disburse 95 to 100 per cent of public investment in 2022. PM Chính ordered ministries and agencies to ensure the efficiency of public investment disbursement and the quality of construction work. The PM also ordered tightening discipline, accelerating land clearance progress, and lifting obstacles in land and natural resources. Ministries and agencies have been asked to directly monitor every project, especially new ones, and improve the quality of consultation work. A public investment disbursement plan, socio-economic development and recovery programme and three national target programmes must be conducted in relevance with Law on Public Investment, National Assembly resolutions and other legal documents. Project investors must prepare for necessary procedures to carry out the implementation work and disburse the project's capital immediately after being assigned the 2023 capital plan. Localities must cut down on capital on projects that cannot be implemented or have no urgent need to avoid the case where many capital plans are proposed, but capital is not fully disbursed. According to the PM, agencies and localities must ensure the capital is applied economically and efficiently.

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South Asia

BHUTAN: ADB to Support Construction of First Utility-Scale Solar Power Plant

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$18.26 million financing for the construction of the first utility-scale solar photovoltaic power plant in Bhutan. To be built in central-west Bhutan, the power plant will have a minimum total capacity of 17.38-megawatts peak and will generate 25 gigawatt-hours of electricity annually. This will help diversify Bhutan's energy mix, which is almost exclusively reliant on hydropower and makes the sector vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. "This project will be the country's first major step toward diversifying power generation and increasing the resilience of its energy sector to future climate shocks," said ADB Energy Specialist for South Asia Christoph Meindl. "Increasing temperatures is projected to decrease glaciers and snow-covered areas, which will shift Bhutan's hydrological system to a more rainfall-dominated pattern. This affects hydropower generation due to expected frequent droughts outside of the monsoon season and extreme high flows during the monsoon season." The financing consists of an \$8.26

million concessional loan and an ADB-administered \$10 million grant from the Asian Development Fund. The Government of Bhutan is contributing \$990,000 to the project.

The project is supported by a technical assistance (TA) amounting \$20,000 from ADB's Technical Assistance Special Fund and \$450,000 from the Republic of Korea e-Asia and Knowledge Partnership Fund. The TA will support learning opportunities on climate-resilient energy systems for higher secondary students in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics stream as well as the Department of Renewable Energy (DRE) under the Ministry of Economic Affairs. Women will constitute around 30%–40% of the beneficiaries of these learning programs. The TA will also help the DRE conduct a gender equality and social inclusion mainstreaming self-assessment that will help the agency adopt an inclusive policy on a corporate level, such as supporting gender-balanced staffing, proactive recruitment of persons with disabilities, and equality of pay, among others.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 10/19/2022

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INDIA: Haryana Bags Second Rank in the Country in Swachh Survekshan Rural 2022

Haryana has secured the second rank in the country in Swachh Survekshan Rural 2022 ranking in an event organised at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi yesterday. On the basis of Swachh Survekshan Grameen 2022, ODF Sustainability for Total Sanitation, and excellent implementation of various components of ODF Plus, the state got the second position in the country under the category of States having a population of more than 30 lakhs. Haryana Development and Panchayats Minister, Sh. Devender Singh Babli received this award from the President, Smt. Draupadi Murmu, today, in a programme organised at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. Union Minister of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Sh. Giriraj Singh, Union Minister of Jal Shakti, Sh. Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Union Minister of State for Jal Shakti and Food Processing Industries, Sh. Prahlad Singh Patel, and Minister of State, Jal Shakti and Tribal Affairs, Sh. Bishweswar Tudu were present on the occasion. Development and Panchayats Minister, Sh. Devender Singh Babli said that every department of the state is committed to taking the state to the highest progress by adopting innovative working procedures and implementing schemes.

Special focus is being given to accelerating development growth in rural areas along with uplifting their lifestyle. He said that along with the officers of the development and panchayats department, swachhta Sainik, education department, women and child development department, and other social institutions played a key role in achieving this remarkable target. They have played a major role in generating awareness regarding the Swachhta campaign with a special focus on the rural areas in collaboration with the government. The Minister for Development and Panchayats

said that from September 17, the birthday of the Prime Minister, Sh. Narendra Modi to October 2, the birthday of the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, Swachhta Pakhwada is celebrated every year across the country. During the same period, district-level “Swachhta Hi Sewa” programme was also run in the state. Under this, cleanliness campaigns were conducted in every village and people were made aware about not using single-use plastic and keeping their surroundings clean through awareness march, prabhat pheris, signature campaigns, community support, and other means.

He said that the fact that the Bhiwani district ranked top in the nation’s overall rural cleanliness survey indicates that both government and the rural public are very concerned about maintaining cleanliness. He informed that in 22 villages of Bhiwani district, rain and dirty water have been managed by making special structures. Along with this, 24 ponds are being renovated and beautified under the Mission Amrit Sarovar project in different villages of the district. He further added that the geographical conditions of Haryana are different in every district. The government and administration are doing a commendable job. Understanding their responsibility toward the environment, people also have to contribute significantly in keeping their surroundings clean. He added that we all have to adopt a technique for proper disposal of our household garbage which is the need of the hour. Haryana Government is planning to collect garbage from every household in villages on the lines of cities.

From <https://egov.eletsonline.com> 10/04/2022

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President of India Launches ‘herSTART’ – A Start-up Platform for Women Entrepreneurs

Droupadi Murmu, President of India, established ‘herSTART’ – a start-up platform of Gujarat University in Ahmedabad recently. She laid the foundation stone virtually from Gujarat University for various projects of the government of Gujarat related to education and tribal development. Speaking on the occasion, she said that it is a matter of pride for Gujarat University that not only Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi but also the father of India’s space program, Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, Former Chairman of ISRO, Dr. K. Kasturirangan; and Union Home Minister, Shri Amit Shah are alumni of this university. She also said that it is natural for an institution that has alumni like Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, to be a pioneer in science, research, and innovation. There are more than 450 start-ups working on the campus of Gujarat University, and more than 125 women-led start-ups are being actively supported by this university, she commented. Around 15,000 women entrepreneurs are associated online or offline with this initiative. She was pleased to inaugurate a start-up platform that is dedicated to women entrepreneurs in such a start-up-friendly university. She expressed confidence that this platform will not only boost the innovation, and start-up efforts of women entrepreneurs but also demonstrate to be an effective

platform for connecting women entrepreneurs with various government and private enterprises.

The president was also elated to inaugurate projects like Sainik School, Girls Literacy Residential School, and Eklavya Model Residential School related to education, especially girls and tribal education in Gujarat. Because the foundation stone for further strengthening India's position in science, research, and innovation will be built through school education. "Gujarat has made remarkable progress in the field of education among other sectors. The school drop-out rate in the state has come down from 22 per cent to 1.37 percent in the last two decades. The teacher-student ratio has also improved from 40 to 26," she added. The real-time monitoring of students and teachers is being done in about 55,000 schools via 'Vidya Samiksha Kendra', which is resulting in an expansion in the learning outcome of the students. She noted that under the 'Mission School of Excellence', a target has been set to upgrade the infrastructure of about 20,000 schools in the state in the next five years. Gujarat has also made significant progress in the field of higher education. While the number of colleges in the state was 775 in 2001-02, in 2020-21 this number increased to more than 3,100. India's first education quality and monitoring cell, 'Garima Cell' has been established in this state for evaluation of higher education. She said that with the effective implementation of 'Van Bandhu-Kalyan Yojana', there has been a significant increase in the literacy rate in the tribal society. This scheme has also improved the school dropout rate among tribal students. She additionally said, "Every state has its own model of development which is determined by the resources and needs of the state, but the manner in which Gujarat has made all-around progress, has shown the path of inclusive development to other states." She expressed confidence that India will secure its place as a developed country during Amrit-Kaal, if all states move forward by learning from each other and adopting their successful models.

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Healthcare Turning Self-reliant with Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence (AI) in healthcare holds the potential to transform & revolutionise the segment. Facilitating access to the last mile, enhancing the patient experience, and ensuring quality care & delivery management to patients, AI has turned the healthcare ecosystem towards self-reliance, driving India's mission to become Atmanirbhar. The adoption of AI and other technologies found further acceptance and acceleration at a time when the world grappled with the pandemic. The need to anticipate the impact of potential treatment and to be prepared well ahead of time required largescale investment and attention to be given to data analytics and the usage of AI. The promise of AI in medicine is to provide a panoramic view of individual medical data to transform many aspects of patient care, as well as administrative processes. "AI and robotics are transforming healthcare delivery as it

helps to deploy more precise, efficient, and impactful interventions at exactly the right moment in a patient's care. AI is an engine that will drive improvements across healthcare and learning algorithms will become more precise, as they interact with training data. It allows doctors to gain insights into diagnostics, care processes, and patient outcomes," averred Jeyakumar Ramachandran, Chief Operating Officer, KG Hospital and Post Graduate Medical Institute, Coimbatore Administrative AI tools reduce provider burden and increase efficiency by the use of NLP for recording digital notes and automating laborious tasks such as retrieval of required information from unstructured medical records, lab results, or medical history.

Dr Reena Nakra, Principal Director - Lab Management & Technical Excellence, Dr. Lal PathLabs Ltd avers that though the concept of digital healthcare predates the pandemic, the crisis proved to be the catalyst for the increase in its adoption. "The accessibility of digital technology now is unbelievably different than it was two years ago and the rate of change is not linear; it is exponential. By the 1950s, medical knowledge had doubled in about 50 years. In 2020, the volume of medical knowledge doubled in 73 days. Both the quality and consistency of data are improving as more data is machine-generated. Wearables produce new types of longitudinal data. Genomics data are becoming more accessible as the costs of sequencing and bioinformatics techniques have plummeted. The increased adoption of electronic health records (EHRs) and personal healthcare records that can connect longitudinal data and genomics data provides further possibilities for AI to grow," she adds. As a result, care delivery is undergoing several transformations: from sick care to preventive whole person care, from intermittent to continuous care, from facility based settings to Omni channel offerings, and from standardised to personalised solutions. She stated that providers are embracing technology to help improve patient outcomes outside hospital boundaries. By providing patients with an array of medical devices such as implantables, blood pressure cuffs, sensors, and wearables, doctors can access real-time patient data remotely. It enables doctors to consistently monitor their discharged patients and act on vital data which further reduces frequent visits of patients to doctors and expedites the recovery process.

"AI tools are improving healthcare operations that include scheduling, hospital admissions, discharge and capacity management, optimising processes in the operating room, and the emergency department. Such applications can significantly reduce waiting times, and increase transparency, leading to a better patient experience. She shared some specific use cases where AI is playing a critical role in making healthcare traverse distances. She further states that there are certain medical specialties that lend themselves naturally to AI applications, due to their large emphasis on pattern recognition, such as Radiology, Pathology, Dermatology, and Ophthalmology. Dr Nakra also stated that to further enhance the efficiency and reduce the transcription burden in their lab, Medical Speech to Text Software, Augnito is being used. "This medical voice AI empowers our pathologists to produce accurate and complete medical reports within minutes making medical reporting

simple. The App is dialect agnostic and recognises all accents without the need for voice training. Dr Lal PathLabs is also in the process of validating a CE-IVD marked AI tool from Panakeia for predicting ER, PR, Her2neu status on breast cancer histopathology slides without the use of IHC staining. This has the potential to bring down testing costs for breast cancer reporting,” shared Dr Nakra. AI offers numerous advantages over traditional analytics and clinical decision-making techniques. Learning algorithms can become more accurate and precise as they interact with training data, which allows humans to gain unprecedented insights into diagnostics, treatment variability, care processes, and patient outcomes. “Technology applications are encouraging healthier behaviour in people and help with the proactive management of a healthy lifestyle. It is putting consumers in control of their health and well-being. Additionally, artificial intelligence enhances the ability of healthcare professionals to better understand the day-to-day patterns and needs of the patients they care for, and with that understanding, they are able to provide better guidance, feedback, and support for staying healthy, stated Vineet Aggarwal, CIO, Paras Healthcare.

Crystal-gazing into the future, he further states that there is a shift being witnessed from “healthcare” to “health”. While it would be hard to eliminate diseases completely, through technology, science, and data we will be able to identify diseases earlier, intervene proactively, and better understand their progression to help consumers more effectively and actively sustain their well-being. “The focus of the future will be on wellness and managed by healthcare providers that assume new roles to drive value in a transformed healthcare ecosystem. We expect six key areas — interoperability, data sharing, equitable access, behavior change, scientific breakthrough, and empowered consumers — to collectively transform the present health system from treatment based reactionary care to prevention and well-being,” shared Aggarwal. The origin of digital technologies has substantially altered the healthcare landscape over the past few years. It has shifted the healthcare system towards being self-reliant and making the citizens of India Atmanirbhar. It has accelerated the need for care providers and medical device manufacturers to be agile while maintaining high product quality and regulating costs. AI can certainly bring new efficiencies in healthcare outcomes in India. It is expanding into the public health sector and is moving towards having a major impact on every aspect of primary care. Undoubtedly, AI is going to be an integral part of medicine in the future. Hence, it is crucial to train the new generation of medical trainees regarding the concepts and applicability of AI and how to function efficiently in a workspace alongside machines for better productivity, and formulating soft skills like empathy in them.

From <https://ehealth.eletsonline.com/> 10/10/2022

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Digital Transformation: An Era of New-age Education

The world of education has drastically changed & learning with a multidisciplinary approach needs extraordinary skill sets (Design thinking & Digital learning) to make the child capable of transitioning into the future of work. It's a skill that not only helping the students to understand what they are learning but helping them to question the work they are doing. It's required for everyone all over the world, not only limited to classrooms. Design thinking is a part of the project-based learning educational model. It's a child-centric approach to finding solutions to real-life problems by identifying and developing innovative and creative solutions. Students transform themselves into optimistic, emphatic, and smart working members of society who can solve complex challenges of the coming future. Design thinking methods encourage students to address challenges with a sense of empathy. Design thinking can be used in the classroom to build problem solving skills (PSS). The Pandemic (COVID-19) has affected educational institutions all over the world both Developed and Developing countries. Students in the world were unable to go to school physically. The impact has been transformative as we educators are looking forward to implementing technology solutions to enable online teaching and learning.

Digital transformation in education is not restricted to online teaching and learning during- COVID-19, but post-COVID also, it's in Hybrid mode. Some educational institutions have been using technology solutions for the last many years, and most schools and universities have now realized the significance of digital transformation in education during the COVID-19 outbreak. Digital transformation in Education means enhancing an organization's core operations to meet students, parents, and educators' requirements efficiently. he Digital transformation is aiming at enhancing the student's experience by allowing them to register for admission via mobile app or web app, providing a wide array of online learning options, and using technology to track students' progress. It also helps and allows faculties to organise online classes. Digital transformation in education does not only mean improving students' experience; it also focuses on enhancing the campus environment, teaching, and learning methods.

Educational institutions have started realising the significance of digital transformation in education with the increased use of online classes and video conferencing solutions. It is the right time to implement and build technology solutions that will transform the new way of learning. We have to understand how technology can help to bring efficiency. Online teaching is an opportunity to build new teaching method and connect with students efficiently. These days everyone is having smart devices, including smartphones, computers, laptops, and tablets. Learning by using technology is a new effective way to bring better learning & experiences for students. In the modern educational world, different new methods can be introduced in digital transformation. At last, I want to tell you that with the digitisation of the learning experience, both students and teachers can enhance their skills to create an engaging educational process. From online learning to the smart classroom, analysis of students' performance, personalised learning experience, and

online examination, we can transform our educational institute in many ways in the 21st century.

From <https://egov.eletsonline.com> 10/12/2022

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Delhi Education Model Gaining Global Popularity

The AAP's education model is gaining popularity across the world said Deputy CM Manish Sisodia on Thursday, and the neighboring countries are showing keen interest in adopting the best practices from Delhi's government schools for the development of their education systems. Sisodia, who is also the education minister, said a delegation of 30 school principals, vice principals, and teachers from the municipality of Tilottama, Lumbini, Nepal is on a 3-day visit to Delhi government schools in a press conference. "As a government, our motto is to establish an educated nation that can efficiently deal with the issues of poverty, unemployment, and inequality. Only education is the solution to all these issues. By improving school infrastructure and introducing new curriculums, our aim is to provide new opportunities to students and help them learn and grow as responsible citizens. This goal of the government is being achieved successfully with the efforts of teachers who are provided global-level training by the government for their professional enrichment," Deputy CM further said. "We are introducing a series of initiatives to bring about changes in government schools. Delhi education model was the first we could think of when we were looking for best practices to be implemented in our schools. It is our curiosity to learn from the education model of Delhi and understand the ground-level implementation process of unique curricula for holistic development of children, that brought us here", said Shyam Lal Kharel, an academician and member of the delegation while sharing the purpose of the visit.

From <https://egov.eletsonline.com> 10/14/2022

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Foreign Universities Waiting for Government to Formalise Guidelines to Set Up Campuses in India

According to top officials at the University of South Australia (UNiSA), foreign universities are waiting for the Indian government to formalise guidelines. So that they could set up campuses in the country. They termed India's move to let foreign universities operate in the country as a major development. "Many universities in Australia and other countries are waiting for the guidelines to be formalised," said Rishen Shekhar, director, Global Recruitment and Engagement, UNiSA. "We already deliver similar hybrid models in countries like Malaysia, Singapore, and China but we haven't done it in India so far due to the regulations. We can replicate the same in India but we need to understand the legislation first," he further added. The new National Education Policy (NEP) states that the world's top 100 universities will be facilitated to operate in the country through a new law. After the earlier policies that

were brought in 1968 and 1986, NEP 2020 is the third major revamp of the education framework in India since its independence. So far the engagement between India and Australia in the education sector was limited to research and student exchange, said Tom Steer, chief academic officer at UniSA. "NEP is an extremely positive policy because it really will make studying at international universities not only more accessible but also relevant," he further said.

The top officials were part of a contingent that recently visited Delhi to promote the "Bachelor of Digital Business Degree" course. Over 1,600 Indian students are enrolled in different courses at UNiSA. The University Grants Commission (UGC) in April had approved regulations for Indian and foreign higher educational institutions to offer joint or dual degrees and twinning programmes. According to the approved regulations, a "twinning programme" will be a collaborative arrangement whereby students enrolled with an Indian higher education institution may undertake their programmes of study partly in India, complying with the relevant UGC regulations, and partly in a foreign higher educational institution. The UGC had, however, clarified that no franchise arrangement or study centre, "whether overtly or covertly, by whatever nomenclature used, between a foreign higher education institution and an Indian higher educational institution shall be allowed under these regulations".

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Apeejay Stya University Signs MoU with Amarant Life Sciences to Provide Professional Training

Apeejay Stya University, School of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Gurugram, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Amarant Life Sciences Pvt Ltd, a Delhi-based pharmaceutical company, to provide students with suitable professional training and enrichment which will prepare them for success in the pharmaceutical industry. The main objective of MoU was to develop the required skills & acumen among the students and act as an effective manifestation of an industry-academia partnership that can add value in the rapidly growing pharmaceutical sector. The tie-up will enable knowledge sharing via exposure of regulatory affairs and skill development in the area of project management, compliance, documentation, processes and systems. Further, domain-specific workshops and training will also be provided to the students. School of Pharmaceutical Sciences offers career-focused Pharmacy courses that have been designed in collaboration with the Pharmaceutical organisations of repute. The R&D centre for pharmaceutical research ensures holistic and experiential learning for the students who are familiarised with the knowledge of formulation development comprising basic drug designing to the final stages of clinical trials. Amarant Life Sciences Pvt Ltd, will provide technical know-how (in online and offline mode) through company experts to the students, on and beyond the pharmacy curriculum, technology trends and industrial requirements. Also, they will train the students on the emerging technologies, thereby, bridging the

skill gap and make them industry-ready. The budding pharmacy graduates from the School of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Apeejay Stya University, could play a key role in technological upgradation, innovation and competitiveness of an industry not only locally, but at a global level.

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Central-West Asia

AZERBAIJAN: Visa Reveals Record Number of Contactless Transactions in Public Transport

Visa has announced that it has reached the one billion contactless transaction milestone in public transport for the first time in one year, Trend reports via Visa's Azerbaijani representative office. Europe accounts for the largest share of these transactions, including more than four million per day for the Transport for London system alone. There is also growth in every single region, and in North America, about one in five payments in public transport is contactless. Visa launched a technology for contactless fare payment in commuter trains in Baku at 14 stations of Absheron Ring Railway in 2021. "Passengers of this route can pay for the trip with a contactless bank card or devices with a built-in NFC module: smartphones or smart watches. The project was implemented jointly with Azerbaijan Railways CJSC, the Central Bank of Azerbaijan, the International Bank of Azerbaijan, and with the support of RBC Group, IBA Group, and Azericard," Visa said.

Visa also noted that the rapid growth of digital payments is proof of how attractive this payment option has become for consumers. "In addition to being convenient and flexible for customers, contactless payment technology has proven a return on investment for transport companies. Visa is working with city halls, urbanists, city transport departments, operators and solution providers to rethink the urban travel experience with a focus on inclusiveness, sustainability, and connectivity in multimodal transport," Visa said. The recent Visa Future of Urban Mobility Survey showed that 91 percent of passengers look forward to contactless payment in public transport, and almost a third named contactless payments as the top feature that will encourage them to use public transport. According to the same study, the majority of public transport passengers, or 88 percent, say that environmental friendliness affects how often they use public transport. At the same time, the majority of employed passengers, or 62 percent, use public transport at least three days a week.

From <https://en.trend.az> 10/05/2022

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Azerbaijan's Food Safety Agency Talks New Requirements for Food Labeling

The Law 'On safety of food products', which will come into force on January 1, 2023, defines new requirements for the information on the label (labeling) of food products, Trend reports citing Food Safety Agency of Azerbaijan. According to the agency, the new law includes additional provisions on labeling requirements. The properties of the food product that aren't specific to it shouldn't be indicated on the product label in accordance with the law. The placement of false information on the label of the products leads to the deception of consumers, thereby violates their rights, and may ultimately cause certain problems for human health and life. Researches have revealed the presence of similar cases in the consumer market. Thus, on the label of some products it's indicated that it has special properties, and contains or doesn't contain certain ingredients, while it has the same properties as other similar food products. This circumstance creates the impression that these products are better than other similar products, which leads to the formation of a false opinion among consumers. The corresponding requirement contained in the Law 'On safety of food products' serves precisely to eliminate such circumstances. With the adoption of this law the use of such names as 'medicinal' on the label of food products is canceled and it's prohibited to indicate on the label of any food product, including mineral water, information that it has properties to prevent various diseases or has healing properties, or to use names that give that impression.

From <https://en.trend.az> 10/13/2022

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Azerbaijan Shares Forecast Education Expenditure for 2023

Spending on education from the state budget in Azerbaijan is envisioned to be increased in 2023, Trend reports on October 25. This issue was reflected in the draft law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On the state budget of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2023", submitted to the Azerbaijani parliament on October 24. According to the draft law, it's envisioned to spend on education 4.4 billion manat (\$2.6 billion), which is 536.5 million manat (\$315.6 million) or 13.8 percent more than in 2022 and 1.3 billion manat (\$760 million) or 42.4 percent more than in 2021. Next year, an increase in the number of students receiving higher education under the state order, as well as scholarship places, providing more student loans to further increase the accessibility of higher education to low-income segments of the population and expand the coverage of higher education, as well as meeting the growing demand for the introduction of information and communication technologies in educational institutions are the main areas of spending on education. According to the draft law, the revenues of the state budget of Azerbaijan next year are projected to equal 30.72 billion manat (\$18.07 billion), and expenditures - 33.3 billion manat (\$19.6 billion).

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ADB Seeks to Support Technological Startups in Azerbaijan's Regions

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) seeks to support technologies startup in Azerbaijan's regions, Country Director of the Asian Development Bank for Azerbaijan Candice McDeigan said during the presentation on the ecosystem of technological startups in Azerbaijan, Trend reports on October 28. "Supporting any business is a key factor in supporting the economic development of a country. In order to become a viable business, startups need to be given access to funding, infrastructure and other important elements," she said. According to McDeigan, Azerbaijan has great potential for the development of technology startups not only in the capital but also in the regions. "ADB also sees a huge interest among the youth in Azerbaijan in launching their own startups. This is really important because this area is developing rapidly and the initiatives of the younger generation will guarantee the success of startups in the country," she added.

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Azerbaijan Sees Increase in Number of Concluded Labor Contracts

The number of concluded labor contracts in Azerbaijan increased by 400,000 or 31.2 percent from 2017 through October 28, 2022, Deputy Prime Minister, Chairman of the Commission for Regulating and Coordinating Labor Relations Ali Ahmadov said during a governmental meeting, Trend reports on October 28. He noted that during this period the number of registered individual entrepreneurs-individuals increased by 58 percent, and legal entities - by 60 percent. "One of the main tasks is also to improve the work of the coordinating committees that provide employment assistance in order to ensure the continuity of achievements in this area," Ahmadov noted.

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CBA Talks on Control of Compulsory Real Estate Insurance Market

The Central Bank of Azerbaijan (CBA) is working on the digitalization of compulsory real estate insurance processes, Executive Director of CBA Ziya Aliyev said during a press conference, Trend reports via CBA. According to him, this will allow CBA to regulate the market and processes of real estate insurance. "Digitalization will allow Azerbaijani citizens to issue electronic insurance, which is a trend today. Work is underway to create an appropriate database and integrate electronic insurance with the systems of insurance bureaus. Relevant instructions have been given in the regions of the country. Central Bank also considers it obligatory to stimulate and inform the population about compulsory insurance," Aliyev said.

From <https://en.trend.az> 10/28/2022

TAJIKISTAN: Taking Steps to Integrate Modern Technologies in Transport System

Tajikistan is taking steps to integrate modern technologies into the development of transport systems, Trend reports with reference to asiaplustj.info. There are currently several taxi services in Tajikistan that allow people to order a car via apps or by calling the operator, such as: Somon Taxi, Rakhsh, and Asia Express, but their interface, number of available cars, and delivery speed are still far behind their international competitors, such as the Uber platform. Modernization of the segment and the introduction of modern technologies are required for Tajikistan's transport industry's development. For instance, in August of this year, the Minister of Transport of Tajikistan Azim Ibrohim chaired a conference called "Accelerate digitalization to improve transit and simplify the business process." Representatives from 32 countries and 30 international organizations took part in the conference. The digitalization of the transport process has become one of the key topics for discussion. Therefore, the benefits of integrating modern technologies into the development of transport systems are currently being actively studied by the government of Tajikistan. "Now Tajikistan's Ministry of Transport is working on the coordination of the relevant digitalization project. The project will be available in the public domain immediately after its approval," the message says.

From <https://en.trend.az> 10/22/2022

Oceania

AUSTRALIA: Innovative Bush Fire Tech Put to the Test

High-tech sensors which can predict and detect fires and clean energy solutions for bush fire-affected communities are among five innovative ideas being piloted under a landmark NSW Government research and development (R&D) program. Minister for Science, Innovation and Technology Alister Henskens said the Bushfire Technology Pilots Program, a total of \$6 million over four years, will support trials of field-ready bush fire technology developed by NSW businesses. "NSW is a world leader in bush fire technology and this NSW Government investment is unlocking opportunities for homegrown innovators to test their potentially life saving research," Mr Henskens said. "We're investing in these innovative technologies so that NSW can remain at the cutting edge of bush fire technology, and save lives by enhancing bush fire preparedness and response."

Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience and Minister for Flood Recovery Steph Cooke said the grants on offer through the Bush Fire Technology Pilots Program cover multiple components of a bush fire response, including providing

power to remote sites, real-time monitoring of fire conditions and data-sharing. “The investment being announced today will put innovative technologies to the test so that one day they can be used by our emergency services in NSW, as well as organisations across Australia and the world, to save lives and improve the way we respond to disasters,” Ms Cooke said. NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer Professor Hugh Durrant-Whyte said the wide range of work funded through the grants reflects NSW’s position as a global leader in bush fire technology. “These projects will be collaborative, with grant recipients working closely with lead NSW fire response organisations, including the Rural Fire Service, Fire & Rescue, NSW Telco Authority, National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Department of Planning and Environment,” Professor Durrant-Whyte said.

From <https://afndaily.com.au> 10/02/2022

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Nation’s Biggest Renewable Energy Auction Starts Today

Australia’s biggest renewable energy and storage policy, the NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap officially launched today, paving the way for a cheaper, cleaner and more reliable energy future for NSW. Minister for Energy Matt Kean said the first tender for renewable energy and long duration storage contracts opens today, the first in a series of bi-annual tenders over 10 years to replace retiring coal fired power stations with modern electricity infrastructure. “NSW is targeting the construction of 12 gigawatts of renewable energy by 2030, enough to power the equivalent of 5.8 million homes, as well as 2 gigawatts of long duration storage like pumped hydro, making this the biggest renewable energy policy in Australia’s history,” Mr Kean said. “The opening of the first tender marks a major milestone in the delivery of our renewable energy and storage plans, it’s expected to create a jobs and investment boom across NSW.”

Mr Kean said that the Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap is the State’s landmark energy policy designed to replace the generation capacity from four out of five of NSW’s coal-fired power stations, which are scheduled to retire in the next 11 years. “NSW is building five massive Renewable Energy Zones across the State, which will produce cheap, clean electricity for generations to come and create major investment opportunities for industry and small businesses. “Putin’s illegal invasion of Ukraine has put enormous pressure on power prices and shows why we need to fast track our plans to replace ageing power stations and reduce our reliance on generation that relies on volatile international commodity prices.” The Roadmap is forecast to lead to savings of around \$130 a year on average on the typical household electricity bill and \$430 a year on the average small business electricity bill between 2023 and 2040, compared to if the Roadmap is not implemented.

From <https://afndaily.com.au> 10/05/2022

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First Community Projects Announced for City-Shaping Westinvest Fund

Residents in Canterbury-Bankstown will benefit from new state-of-the-art community facilities, new parks and priority pedestrian links through the first Local Council projects announced as part of the \$5 billion WestInvest Fund. As part of the WestInvest Fund, \$2 billion was reserved for priority Community Projects. This included \$400 million for 15 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in West and South West Sydney, with each local council eligible for between \$20 million and \$35 million, depending on population size. Premier Dominic Perrottet, Treasurer Matt Kean and Minister for Local Government Wendy Tuckerman today announced \$24 million in funding to Canterbury-Bankstown Council for four projects, which will deliver transformational infrastructure. Projects co-funded by Westinvest for Canterbury-Bankstown include: \$10 million towards the \$20 million Revitalising Campsie Civic Precinct project to create a dedicated arts and culture precinct, including a new library, civic meeting facilities and indoor and outdoor community spaces.

\$5 million towards the \$10 million Roberts Park Community Hub project which will provide a new multipurpose facility at the former YMCA site for Greenacre residents. \$5 million towards the \$6.5 million Wran District Park project which will overhaul the green space and decommission the aged Wran Leisure Centre to create a destination open space with multipurpose courts and a bespoke play space. \$4 million towards the \$5 million Local Traffic Program project which will deliver 6.2km of priority pedestrian infrastructure and 10 traffic management devices across 45 locations to increase pedestrian safety and support accessibility in the community. The WestInvest Fund was made possible by the Government's successful WestConnex asset recycling strategy.

The projects included in the Local Government Allocation will be announced in coming weeks, which will deliver enormous benefits across West and South West Sydney, including: At least 13 new and revitalised parks At least seven activated high streets More than 15 new and upgraded community centres Nine upgraded sports grounds and fields More than 25km of new walking and cycling tracks More than nine new BMX and skating tracks and parks Thousands of new trees and greenery. Mr Perrottet said these projects would deliver real results in local communities and help build a brighter future for the people of Western Sydney. "These projects funded in Canterbury-Bankstown will replace ageing community facilities with new cultural hubs, deliver new open and green space and create much needed pedestrian links and traffic improvements," Mr Perrottet said.

"We're backing the future of Western Sydney through WestInvest by helping to build new and improved facilities that will benefit families, residents and businesses across the region." Mr Kean said the Roberts Park Community Hub project will replace an

ageing facility to deliver a new multipurpose community centre, a childcare centre, a new library kiosk and a commercial kitchen for the Meals on Wheels service. “The \$20 million Revitalising Campsie Civic Precinct will create a cultural destination for the local community with a new library, a cultural space as well as indoor and outdoor community spaces,” Mr Kean said. Mrs Tuckerman said the NSW Government allocated each of the 15 local WestInvest councils a share in the funding to expedite projects and ensure communities benefit sooner.

“As the closest level of government to the community, councils play an essential role in delivering services and facilities that meet the needs of locals. This funding will accelerate the projects that we believe will deliver the greatest benefit on the ground,” Mrs Tuckerman said. Canterbury-Bankstown Council was allocated more than \$34 million as part of the \$400m Local Council direct allocation with further successful projects in Canterbury-Bankstown and other LGAs will be announced soon. A further \$1.6 billion from the \$2 billion Community Project Grants is available to local community groups including Councils, with successful projects to be announced from December. The \$5 billion WestInvest program also includes \$3 billion to deliver transformational projects that will benefit local communities, led by NSW Government agencies.

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Innovative Partnership Set to Train the Next Generation of Trades Workers

The next generation of trades workers will be equipped with the skills fundamental to building the smart cities of the future, as part of the NSW Government’s revolutionary new TAFE NSW Institute of Applied Technology for Construction. Minister for Skills and Training Alister Henskens today announced that Australasia’s leading construction company CPB Contractors and Western Sydney University will join forces with TAFE NSW to pioneer new ways of training at the state-of-the-art \$84 million facility at Kingswood. “This innovative partnership will pave the way for students to merge the knowledge gained through university study with the hands-on practical and technical skills acquired through vocational education,” Mr Henskens said. “This is the future of skills and training and the NSW Government is leading the nation in investing in this critical infrastructure which will be a flagship educational centre, supporting the pipeline of major infrastructure projects which will grow the economy and help secure a brighter future for the people of NSW.”

Member for Penrith Stuart Ayres said together, these partners will revolutionise education and training in Western Sydney by creating industry-led and embedded training programs which will rapidly upskill the local construction workforce. “To have a leader in construction like CPB Contractors as a foundational industry partner for the IAT for Construction puts real muscle behind this venture and will ensure we have

a sustainable workforce that will service Western Sydney's fast-growing population now and into the future," Mr Ayres said. Managing Director of CPB Contractors Jason Spears said he recognised the need for businesses to leave a lasting skills legacy through innovative collaboration with education providers. "We are seeing unprecedented levels of construction, and this state-of-the-art training facility will equip students with real-world skills to meet current workforce needs while futureproofing Australia's construction capability," Mr Spears said.

"We are proud to work with TAFE NSW and Western Sydney University to build a new educational model and learning experience that is flexible, scalable, accessible, and promotes greater diversity of thought across the industry." Vice-Chancellor of Western Sydney University Professor Barney Glover AO said the Institute will leverage the university's world-leading expertise in engineering, smart construction, architecture, design, and advanced manufacturing. "This is an exciting new model for education and training. With this Institute, we will co-design and co-deliver highly flexible education programs that integrate research-led learning with advanced technical and industry-based skills," Professor Glover said. The Institute of Applied Technology for Construction at TAFE NSW Kingswood is due to open in 2023.

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Extra Support for Community Solutions to Homelessness

The Government is once again providing millions of dollars of support to community organisations working to address homelessness, the Associate Housing Minister, Marama Davidson announced today. The Local Innovation and Partnership Fund (LIPF) supports local work and projects that respond to and prevent homelessness. Minister Davidson announced that the third round of funding will open on 1 November, with an additional \$6.8 million available. "Homelessness is not inevitable and it can be solved. This latest round of funding is the next step our Government is taking to do just that," Marama Davidson said. "Community organisations will have the opportunity to access an additional \$6.8 million in Government support for local initiatives that work. This is in addition to the \$10 million we have already allocated to community groups through the fund.

"Homelessness in Aotearoa did not happen overnight. It is the result of decades of underinvestment by previous governments. We are turning this around and supporting more people to find safe, secure places to live. "Ending homelessness means getting to a place where it's rare, brief, and gets solved appropriately and quickly when it does happen. "That is achievable and something this Government is making progress towards, as was shown in the recent review of the Homeless Action Plan. "We are building more affordable homes; supporting rangatahi and young people to find a safe, stable place to live; and supporting people when they are at risk of losing the home they rent. "The Local Innovation and Partnership Fund is a key

part of achieving our Homeless Action Plan. Since the fund was established in 2020, we have supported groups all over Aotearoa to develop innovative solutions that work for their communities.

“For this next round we want to see applications coming in from organisations working on new and innovative ways to address homelessness especially for communities that are more likely to experience discrimination and isolation. “A safe home is the foundation on which our lives are built. Today is another next step in our plan to ensure everyone has a warm, safe, and secure place to live,” Marama Davidson said.

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Further Festivals and Events Funding Available to Multicultural Communities

Further funding is available for festivals and events that celebrate the rich cultural spirit of our State through the NSW Government’s Stronger Together Festival and Event Grants Program. Minister for Multiculturalism Mark Coure said local groups and community organisations can now apply for a share of \$500,000 through the program. “Community festivals and events are integral to the success of NSW and provide a meaningful way to share in our state’s cultural diversity,” Mr Coure said. “These celebrations bring the colour and vibrancy of cultures across the world to our local communities.” “Most importantly, they serve to break down barriers between people by fostering mutual respect and understanding.” The program has previously funded vibrant events such as Little India Harris Park Business Association’s 2022 Deepawali Festival in Parramatta, the Australian Korean Association’s Korean Festival in Strathfield and Buddha’s Light International Association’s Moon Festival in Willoughby. Mr Coure said this funding is in addition to the more than \$1 million the NSW Government has already invested in cultural events and festivals this year. “If you are an organiser of a community festival or event anywhere in NSW, now is your chance to apply for funding to support community harmony.” The Stronger Together Festival and Events Grants provide between \$5,000 and \$15,000 towards the running of celebrations held between 1 February 2023 and 30 June 2023. The grants program is now open. Applications close at 3pm, Friday 28 October, with outcomes announced in early December.

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Westmead to Become World-Class Innovation Hub

Westmead will be transformed into a world-class health and innovation district over the next two decades, under an integrated planning and transport vision unveiled by the NSW Government in Western Sydney today. Minister for Planning and Homes

Anthony Roberts said the finalised Westmead Place Strategy would guide future planning and development decisions to create Australia's premier health and innovation district. "The plan includes 12 directions, supported by planning priorities, to transform Westmead and Parramatta North into a world-leading economic powerhouse," Mr Roberts said. "Prioritising new jobs, encouraging greater housing diversity, boosting open space and protecting some of our nation's oldest heritage sites, are just some of the priorities underpinning our vision." Minister for Transport, Veterans and Western Sydney David Elliott today announced the Westmead Place-based Transport Strategy in Western Sydney, which will integrate with the wider Place Strategy to support jobs, public transport accessibility and high-quality open space.

"Central to this strategy is a transport vision for Westmead that is well-connected and sustainable while anticipating changes in land use, population and travel demand," Mr Elliott said. "It will capitalise on more than \$14 billion committed by the NSW Government for public transport, including the Parramatta Light Rail and Sydney Metro West, to support our target of 50,000 jobs in Westmead by 2036." Minister for Active Transport and Cities Rob Stokes said 43 initiatives have been identified to achieve the vision for future transport in the area. "These initiatives include the transformation of Westmead Station as a centrepiece of the precinct, along with a walking and cycling network that links locals and visitors to nearby beautiful open spaces," Mr Stokes said. "The implementation of this strategy will greatly increase access to and from Westmead within a 30-minute public transport journey, and we will explore a trial of night-time on-demand services for the activation of a 24-hour economy." The NSW Government will now progress the outcomes of the Westmead Place-based Transport Strategy and collaborate with councils to prepare an integrated transport and traffic study to support the future rezoning of the area.

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Funding to Fast Track Bushfire Technology

NSW businesses trialling innovative, field-ready bushfire technologies can now apply for the second round of the NSW Government's Bushfire Technology Pilots Program. Minister for Science, Innovation and Technology Alister Henskens said the \$2.6 million program would provide grants of up to \$250,000, to help innovators turbocharge their research into practical solutions that will improve bushfire detection, preparation and response. "We are investing in these technologies to ensure our State continues to be a world leader in bushfire technology," Mr Henskens said. "As well as giving homegrown innovators the opportunity to test their cutting-edge technology, the program provides them with critical links to frontline services, so they can fast track the adoption of new approaches. "This program demonstrates the NSW Government's commitment to R&D, turning local research into new industries, which will create jobs, grow the economy and help secure a brighter future for NSW."

Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience Steph Cooke said the program builds on the success of the first round of funding, with five innovative ideas now being piloted. “The first round of grants included providing power to remote sites, real-time monitoring of fire conditions and data-sharing,” Ms Cooke said. “By their very nature bushfires are difficult to control and very dangerous, which is why we need to invest in new technology to innovate our State’s firefighting response to better protect communities from future natural disasters. “I look forward to seeing what innovations come through next to complement the incredible work of our emergency service organisations.”

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NEW ZEALAND: Government Partners with Industry to Reduce Agricultural Emissions

New Zealand’s effort to reduce agricultural emissions has taken a step forward with the signing of a memorandum of understanding by Government with agribusiness leaders, in a joint venture as part of the new Centre for Climate Action on Agricultural Emissions, Agriculture Minister Damien O’Connor announced. The Ministry for Primary Industries signed the agreement alongside representatives from ANZCO Foods, Fonterra, Ngāi Tahu Holdings, Ravensdown, Silver Fern Farms and Synlait. “We are committed to reducing agricultural emissions and for this we need to get new tools and technology into the hands of farmers as soon as possible. This joint venture will be a combined effort by government and industry to achieve this,” Damien O’Connor said. “It will be a long-term partnership with industry funding being matched by the Government.

“Initial indicative commitments would see around \$172 million invested over the next four years by industry and government to develop and commercialise practical tools and technologies for farmers. “That includes \$7.75 million by industry this financial year alone. “This represents a new and exciting way of working. By working together, we can help farmers shift the dial sooner. “New Zealand can be, and should be, a leader in developing innovative new tools and technologies to reduce emissions on-farm, and be the one other countries can look to,” Damien O’Connor said. The joint venture is a key component of the Centre for Climate Action on Agricultural Emissions. The Centre was announced as part of the \$338.7 million in funding allocated over the next four years to strengthen the role of research and development for new tools and technologies to reduce on-farm emissions which was announced in Budget 2022. This includes the Government’s funding component of the joint venture. The agriculture sector contributes 50 per cent of Aotearoa New Zealand’s gross greenhouse gas emissions, and around 91 per cent of our biogenic methane emissions. The Government has committed to a net-zero target for 2050 and reducing biogenic methane emissions by 10 per cent by 2030, relative to 2017

levels, and 24 to 47 per cent lower by 2050.

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142,000 Kiwis Helped by Healthy Homes Initiative

More than 31,000 children, pregnant people and 111,000 of their family members are warmer and healthier thanks to the Healthy Homes Initiative according to the latest three-year evaluation report released today. The Healthy Homes Initiative has delivered over 100,000 interventions – providing education, beds and bedding, curtains, housing relocation, and heating to those who need it most. The Government recently expanded the scheme to cover the whole country by the end of the year. “It is our belief as a Government that everyone deserves a warm, dry, healthy home,” Associate Minister of Health Ayesha Verrall said. “Poor housing stock can make people sick and by improving housing conditions, people are healthier and more likely to stay in school or in work, while also relieving pressure on the health system. “These results support our decision to expand the programme to nationwide coverage. We inherited a programme that was underfunded and narrowly targeted. We’ve invested \$30 million in the initiative and in Budget 22 funded its extension to the whole country.

“We anticipate that this expansion can extend the benefits of the programme to a large number of people across the whole country. “This is an example of our wellbeing investment working. Programmes like this are improving the health and wellbeing of New Zealanders and are a key component of our plan to make New Zealand the best place in the world to be a child,” Ayesha Verrall said. Initially, the programme targeted low-income families with children at risk of rheumatic fever, but was expanded to focus on families with children aged up to 5 and pregnant women, and recently rolled-out to the rest of the country. Associate Minister of Health Aupito William Sio said the Healthy Homes Initiative had made a huge impact on the health and wellbeing of over 31,000 tamariki/hapū māmā and over 111,000 members of their whānau/aiga. “It’s significant that 94 percent of referrals identify as Māori or Pacific. Many in our communities live in multi-generational households and have multiple health conditions,” Minister Sio said. The programme is part of the Government’s wider housing programme which includes major investment in rebuilding the public housing sector (10,000 additional homes and counting), retrofitting state houses to bring them up to standard and billions of dollars for critical housing infrastructure.

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New Zealand Banning Live Animal Exports

New Zealand will ban live animals being exported out of the country from April 2023.

Aotearoa currently only exports animals for breeding, not slaughter, and it will stop all of these on April 30, 2023. The decision comes two years after 41 crew members and 6,000 cattle died when a storm sank an export ship. Two New Zealanders were killed in the tragedy, which led to an increase in support to ban live exports in the country. Environment minister Damien O'Connor says the new law would protect New Zealand's reputation as the world becomes increasingly more conscious of animal welfare. It protects the reputation of not just farmers, but farmers of the future. Live exports are hugely controversial due to animal welfare concerns. The vessels are often overcrowded, and the animals suffer from disease, exhaustion, and dehydration. Millions of animals, including pigs, cows, and sheep are exported each year around the world.

Many animals have also been killed in accidents. In 2020, 14,000 sheep were killed after a ship capsized. Earlier this year, around 15,000 drowned after another sunk near Sudan. Last year, 134,722 cattle were exported out of New Zealand. New Zealand is relatively far from the countries it exports to, animals can suffer even more than usual on these journeys. The remoteness means animals are at sea for extended periods, heightening their susceptibility to heat stress and other welfare-associated risks. Live exports are hugely controversial across the world, and this move by New Zealand is a significant step against the practice. New Zealand will stop all live exports of livestock by sea on May 1, 2023. New Zealand government data shows in the first half of 2022, the country exported 50,440 live animals, which were all destined to China. Napier is the leading exporting port, handling about three quarters of the consignments. During the period, fatalities stood at 23. In 2021, the country exported 134,722 live animals with 86 reported dead. China remained the sole market.

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Plan for Big Boost in GP Training Numbers

More support is being given to New Zealand medical graduates training to be GPs, as the Government continues its push to get more doctors into communities. "Growing the number of GPs is vital so we can fill today's gaps and make sure we've got the doctors we need in the future, so finding different ways of providing training is essential," Health Minister Andrew Little said in Auckland today. "In August, as part of a wider health workforce announcement, I said we would increase from 200 to 300 the number of GPs trained in New Zealand each year. "Today, I'm pleased to confirm that, after discussions with the Royal College of General Practitioners, measures are being put in place to do that. The package will see doctors who choose to train as GPs paid as much as their hospital counterparts.

"A review published today shows that the fact trainee GPs are paid less than registrars working in hospitals is the biggest barrier to young doctors going into

general practice,” Andrew Little said. “That pay gap will be closed, to bring the pay of first-year GP registrars in line with that of hospital registrars. “Funding is also being increased to enable the Royal College to pay teaching supervisors for an extra two-and-a-half hours a week, and GPs who host 12-week community training modules will be paid hosting fees of \$3600. “Together with the things already under way to make it easier for overseas-trained doctors to come to New Zealand and get registered and practising, these measures will increase the number of GPs working in our communities to keep New Zealanders healthy and out of hospital.” Andrew Little outlined the moves during a visit to the Baderdrive Doctors GP clinic in South Auckland to talk about the practicalities of convincing more young doctors to specialise in general practice.

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Three More Fast-Track Projects Could Create 891 Homes and 912 Jobs

Three new residential housing projects have been approved for consideration under the fast-track consenting process. “These projects are in places where houses are needed and, if they are consented, these developments will create 891 new homes and 912 extra jobs,” Environment Minister David Parker said. The COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Act 2020 is a key part of the Government’s plan to accelerate the economic recovery, speed up some infrastructure projects and boost jobs. The three projects approved under the fast-track referral process today are the: Glenpanel, Ladies Mile – Te Pūtahi project in Lake Hayes, Queenstown, that will redevelop a site creating up to 748 more homes. The project will include a park-and-ride facility to promote public transport use, and potentially a new school. If consented, the project will create up to 313 jobs.

Kepa Road Apartments residential development in Kohimarama, Auckland that will see the development of 58 homes in two buildings, up to seven storeys high. The project is estimated to create 199 jobs. Wellsford North project in north Auckland a medium-density subdivision in north Auckland that will enable construction of approximately 85 homes residential units and create 400 jobs. These three new projects bring the total of projects approved for fast-track consenting to 56. Since 2020, half of the 56 projects approved under the fast-track legislation have now obtained consent. They have the potential to create 8901 jobs and 4142 new homes.

Projects that have received fast-track consents include: the construction of Otawere water storage reservoir in Waimate North (Northland) to support horticultural development the construction of two rail stations in Drury, Auckland that are needed to extend Auckland’s electric rail network from Papakura to Pukekohe the Tauhei Solar Farm in Waikato which will contribute to New Zealand’s effort to transition to a low-emissions economy the Whakatāne commercial boat harbour which will promote

employment and commercial opportunities in the Bay of Plenty the Picton Ferry Terminal Redevelopment to enable the Interisland ferry service to handle higher numbers of passengers and freight the new Dunedin Hospital Outpatients Building which will provide valuable medical facilities for the people of Dunedin the Queenstown Arterials project which will ease congestion in Queenstown's town centre by diverting State Highway 6.

To improve the resource management system, the Government is also repealing the Resource Management Act 1991 and replacing it with two new Acts, the Spatial Planning Act and the Natural and Built Environments that will better enable infrastructure and homes to be built while also protecting the environment. The RMA takes too long and costs too much and hasn't provided for development or housing where needed. "The Infrastructure Commission have reported that infrastructure developers are collectively spending \$1.29 billion annually on resource consent processes. This represents 5.5 per cent of total project costs," David Parker said. "That puts New Zealand at the upper end of approval costs, which are 0.1 to 5 per cent in the UK and the European Union." "The SPA and NBA will better enable infrastructure development by providing national direction on infrastructure, that is being developed by the Infrastructure Commission, simplifying the consenting and designation processes, and carrying forward into the new system a process similar to fast-track consenting for certain infrastructure projects."

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Better Conditions on the Way for Bus Drivers

The Government is supporting the transport sector's efforts to stabilise the public transport workforce with funding from Budget 2022 to help standardise base wages, Transport Minister Michael Wood has announced. "Our Government is committed to making it more affordable, easier and attractive for Kiwis to use public transport, so it's crucial we have the drivers in place to get the system moving," Michael Wood said. "Improving the conditions of drivers will make it easier to recruit and retain the workforce, allowing frequent and reliable bus services. "The minimum terms and conditions were developed through discussions between operators, public transport authorities and unions on how best to improve conditions in the industry and stabilise the workforce."

The \$61 million allocated in Budget 22 will support the sector to standardise minimum base wage rates towards a target rate, as agreed by public transport authorities. The intention is work towards base rates of \$30 per hour for urban services and \$28 per hour for regional services. Public transport authorities and operators will be able to access a share of funding if they contribute to the wage increases, and continue to apply indexation wage rates in the future. "This will help the industry transition to standard terms and conditions for bus drivers, which

currently vary widely throughout the country,” Michael Wood said. In recognition of different pay and conditions currently across the system, public transport authorities will also have the option of providing funding to operators, according to market share, to offer a penal rate for work after 9pm of 1.2x, or a \$30 split shift allowance. This will deliver a level of equality between operators and regions.

“The improved driver terms and conditions will be supported by the Sustainable Public Transport Framework, announced in August, that prioritises fair and equitable treatment of employees, mode-shift and improved environmental and health outcomes,” Michael Wood said. “We recognise the vital role that public transport has in our everyday lives and our economic and environmental future. “We are committed to supporting public transport and I am excited to see the great sector collaboration that has been instrumental in delivering improved terms and conditions across the country. We will continue to work with the sector to on meaningful solutions to support public transport” Michael Wood said. Waka Kotahi will engage with public transport authorities and bus operators to tailor the implementation of the standard to best suit their operational needs.

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Communities Given Greater Powers to Reduce Alcohol Harm

The Government is fixing alcohol legislation that has been used by the alcohol industry and retailers to stop local communities from putting in place rules around the sale of liquor in their area, Justice Minister Kiri Allan announced today. The amendments to the Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act 2012 will remove the ability to appeal local alcohol policies (LAPs). The current appeal process is costing councils and ratepayers millions in legal fees, as alcohol companies and supermarkets have thwarted efforts by local councils to limit the sale of alcohol in their communities. “The law isn’t working as intended. Local communities should be able to set their own rules to reduce alcohol harm, but are being blocked at every step by the booze industry,” Kiri Allan said.

“When the Act was introduced by the National government, it aimed to ensure the safe and responsible sale and consumption of alcohol. But the Act hasn’t worked as intended, creating a system that leaves communities struggling and silenced in their fight against the powerful alcohol industry. “In Auckland, a provisional LAP has been in the appeal process for seven years, at a reported cost to the Council of more than \$1 million in legal fees. The matter is currently before the Supreme Court, which has reserved its decision. “There are similar stories in Wellington and Christchurch, where Councils have abandoned their efforts to put harm reduction plans in place after facing expensive and lengthy legal opposition. In total five councils, including the four largest authorities accounting for half of the total population, have halted or abandoned their efforts to implement LAPs.

“Recently I met with a diverse range of communities in South Auckland who shared with me their experiences in battling against alcohol harm and attempting to reduce the ever-increasing availability of alcohol. It was distressing to see the community prevented from taking action by the deep pockets and legal manoeuvres of those who benefit from alcohol sales. “Ten years ago when the Act was brought in by National, Labour warned it would be weak, wouldn’t achieve the desired outcomes and that we would have to revisit this issue again, because of their failure. My top priority is to bring power back to the people. That’s why the first phase will focus on immediate reforms to licensing procedures,” Kiri Allan said. The Government is also looking to amend rules around the public’s ability to object to a new or renewed alcohol licence application and how objectors can make their case at a licensing hearing.

“Because the hearings are legalistic in nature, I’ve heard concerns that the current process can be too formal, with some community groups saying they’ve felt intimidated and harassed while under cross-examination by highly experienced lawyers representing the interests of those in the alcohol industry. “It was always envisaged that people would have the opportunity to be heard when it comes to how alcohol is sold locally. I’ve heard loud and clear that this part of the Act is not working. A Bill proposing procedural changes to the alcohol licensing process will be introduced this year, with the aim of passing it into law by mid-next year. “These amendments are just the first steps in fixing alcohol laws. The Government will be doing future work to look at licensing structures and processes, marketing and sponsorship, pricing, and changes to ensure the law is responsive to new products and retail models.

“While no decisions have been made our intention is to tilt the balance away from the alcohol industry towards giving community a greater voice and ensuring we are doing more to address the significant impact alcohol has on our communities, whānau and health system. “In recent years, the Government commissioned two reports that emphasised alcohol as a health and justice issue and recommended strengthening alcohol regulations. “These reports and their recommendations will help shape decisions on our next steps,” Kiri Allan said.

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4、 Economic and Social Development and ICT

Asia-Pacific

MENA Economies Grow by 5.5% but Benefits Are Uneven

The economies of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region are expected to grow by 5.5% this year —the fastest rate since 2016—followed by a slowing of growth to 3.5% in 2023. Yet this growth is uneven across the region, as countries, still struggling to overcome the lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, face jolting new shocks from higher oil and food prices brought on by the war in Ukraine, rising global interest rates, and slowdowns in the United States, China, and the Euro area. The World Bank's latest economic update, titled "[A New State of Mind: Greater Transparency and Accountability in the Middle East and North Africa](#)," finds that the region's oil exporting countries are benefitting from high hydrocarbon prices, but oil importing nations confront different circumstances. Oil importers face heightened stress and risk from higher import bills, especially for food and energy, and tightening fiscal space as they spend more on price subsidies to cushion the pain of price rises on their populations.

"All countries in the MENA region will have to make adjustments to deal with significantly higher prices for food and other imports, especially if they lead to an increase in government borrowing or currency devaluations," said **Ferid Belhaj, World Bank Vice President for the MENA region**. *"What countries need now is smart governance to weather the storm and begin to rebuild after multiple shocks on top of the pandemic."* Published twice-yearly, the report says that responsive governance will help countries confront these challenges more effectively now and cement the foundations for long term growth. Each MENA Economic Update has an area of special focus, and this report looks at how reforms leading to more transparency and accountability in public institutions can promote a sustainable economic recovery. Countries are in dire need of establishing systems that allow state bureaucracies to measure results, align responsibilities, experiment, and learn from these results.

"Moving towards greater data transparency and accountability is a game changer for the region; it can help countries identify what is working and needs improvement and to act on it," said **Roberta Gatti, World Bank Chief Economist for the MENA region**. *"It will help them manage risk and shape progress towards a more sustainable and inclusive future. Not only are the potential benefits large, but the reforms needed to put institutions on a learning path are within reach."* The Bank's analysis forecasts diverging paths of growth in the region. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are on track to grow by 6.9% in 2022, buoyed by high hydrocarbon earnings, slowing to 3.7% in 2023 as hydrocarbon prices subside. Developing oil exporters are forecast to experience trends like those of the GCC but at lower levels—with 2022 growth expected to increase to 4.1%, led by Iraq, before falling back to 2.7% in 2023. Developing oil importing countries are expected to grow by 4.5% in 2022 and 4.3% in 2023. However, the slowdown of growth in Europe poses a particular risk, as this group of countries relies more on trade with the Euro area—especially the North African oil importers closest to Europe: Tunisia, Morocco, and Egypt.

Across the region, policymakers have introduced measures—especially price controls and subsidies—to make the domestic price of certain goods, such as food and energy, lower than the global price. The report finds that this has had the effect of keeping inflation in MENA lower than in other regions. In Egypt, for example, average year-on-year inflation during the period of March to July 2022 was 14.3%, but it would have been 4.1 percentage points higher at 18.4%, had authorities not intervened. Some governments have made cash payments to poorer households—a more efficient way of helping the poor deal with rising prices than general market subsidies that lower prices for everyone, including the rich. For Egypt, to lower average inflation by the equivalent of 4.1 percentage points using a subsidy on food and energy prices that benefits the entire population costs 13.2 times more than allowing prices to increase and supporting just the poorest 10 percent of households with a cash transfer.

Governments will incur additional expenses as they increase subsidies and cash transfers to mitigate the damage to the living standards of their populations from higher food and energy prices. For the GCC and developing oil-exporting countries, this is not of much concern now. Windfall increases in state revenues from the rise in hydrocarbon prices have greatly increased their fiscal space and will result in fiscal surpluses for most oil exporters in 2022—even after the additional spending on inflation mitigation programs. Developing oil importers, however, do not have such a windfall and will have to cut other expenditures, find new revenues, or increase deficits and debt to fund the inflation mitigation programs and any other additional spending. Moreover, as global interest rates rise, the debt service burden for oil importers will increase, as they must pay a higher rate of interest both on any new debt they incur and existing debt they refinance, weighing on countries' debt sustainability over time—especially for countries with already high debt levels, such as Jordan, Tunisia, and Egypt.

From <https://www.worldbank.org/> 10/05/2022

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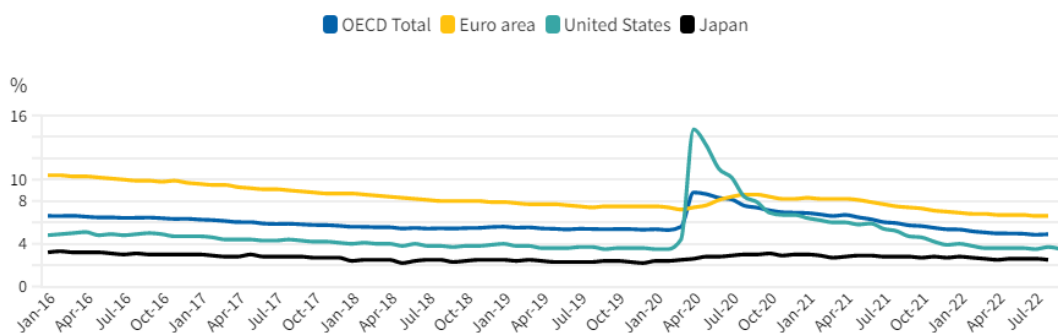
OECD Unemployment Rate Was Broadly Stable in August 2022, Reaching 4.9%

The unemployment rate in the OECD was broadly stable in August 2022, increasing slightly to 4.9%, after 4.8% in July and 4.9% in June (Figure 1, Table 1). The unemployment rate was below or equal to the pre-pandemic rate in 80% of OECD countries (Figure 2). The number of unemployed workers in the OECD increased slightly for the first time since April 2021, reaching 33.2 million. The OECD unemployment rate was stable for both women and men in August, at 5.1% and 4.7% respectively. However, the OECD unemployment rate for younger workers increased, reflecting a marked increase for younger men. The unemployment rate was also stable in the euro area at 6.6% in August, as well as in one third of the euro area

countries. The largest increases occurred in Austria and the Netherlands. Outside the euro area, the unemployment rate fell slightly in Japan. The unemployment rate increased in the United States and more markedly in Canada in August, but slightly declined in both countries in September, according to more recent figures.

In the second quarter of 2022, the OECD employment rate, including both employees and self-employed, reached its highest level since the start of the series in 2005, climbing to 69.5% (Figure 3). About 80% of all OECD countries recorded an increase. The OECD labour force participation rate – the share of the working-age population that is either employed or unemployed – hit 73.2% in Q2 2022, the highest level recorded since the start of the series in 2008 (Figure 4). The female labour force participation rate in the OECD reached 65.9% for the first time since the start of the series.

Figure 1. Unemployment rates
Percentage, seasonally adjusted



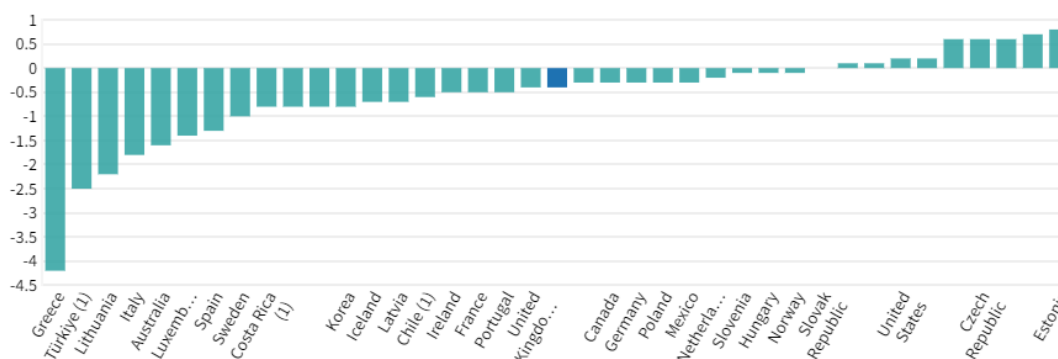
Source: OECD (2022) *Short-Term Labour Market Statistics: Monthly Unemployment Rates (Database)*

(1) The fall in the OECD unemployment rate when compared with the April 2020 peak should be interpreted with caution, as it largely reflects the return of temporary laid-off workers in the United States and Canada, where they are recorded as unemployed, unlike in most other countries, including European member states, where they are recorded as employed.



Change in unemployment rate for OECD countries

August 2022 compared with February 2020, percentage points



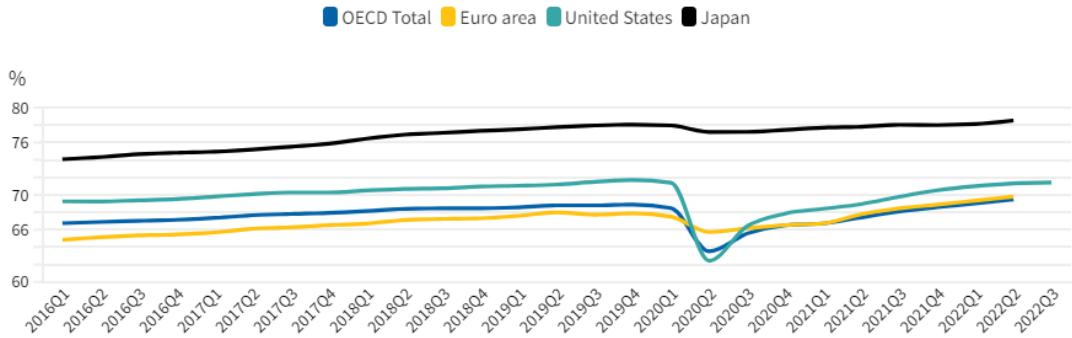
Source: OECD (2022) *Short-Term Labour Market Statistics (Database)*

(1) For Costa Rica, Chile, and Türkiye change between February 2020 and July 2022; for the United Kingdom, change between February 2020 and June 2022; for New Zealand and Switzerland, change between fourth quarter 2019 and second quarter 2022



Figure 3. Employment rates (15 - 64)

as a percentage of the working-age population, seasonally adjusted

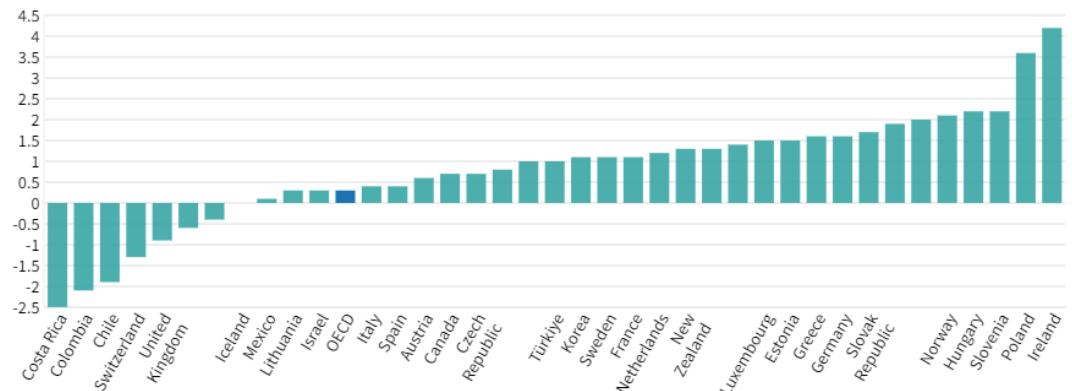


Source: OECD (2022) [Short-Term Labour Market Statistics \(Database\)](#)

(1) A large part of the increase in the employment rate for the OECD in the third quarter of 2020 and, to a lesser extent, fourth quarter of 2020 reflects the return to work of furloughed workers in Canada and the United States, where they are recorded as unemployed, whereas in most other countries, they are recorded as employed

Figure 4 – Change in labour force participation rate for OECD countries

2022 Q2 compared with 2019 Q4, percentage points



Source: OECD (2022) [Short-Term Labour Market Statistics \(Database\)](#)

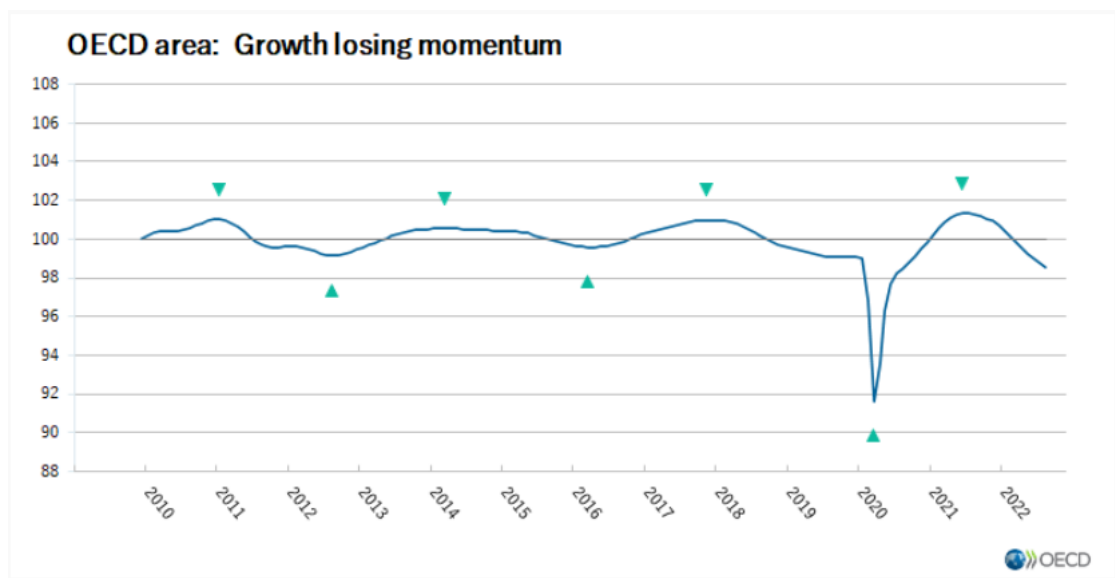
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Leading indicators Continue to Indicate Slowing Growth in Most Major Economies

The OECD Composite Leading Indicators (CLIs), designed to anticipate turning points in economic activity relative to trend with information up to September 2022, continue to indicate slowing growth in the OECD area and in most major economies dragged down by high inflation, increasing interest rates and declining share prices. Among major OECD economies, the CLIs remain below trend and continue to point to slowing growth in Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, and also in the euro area including France, Germany and Italy. The CLI for Japan continues to anticipate stable growth. Among major emerging-market economies, a loss in growth momentum is expected in China (industrial sector) and Brazil but the CLI for India continues to indicate stable growth. 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. In the face of persistent uncertainties related to the impact of the war in Ukraine, especially in energy markets, and ongoing COVID-19 threats, the CLI components might be subject to larger-than-usual fluctuations. As a result, the indicators should be interpreted with care and their magnitude should 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/> 10/11/2022

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Currency Depreciations Risk Intensifying Food, Energy Crisis in Developing Economies

The shrinking value of the currencies of most developing economies is driving up food and fuel prices in ways that could deepen the food and energy crises that many of them already face, according to the World Bank's latest *Commodity Markets Outlook* report. In U.S. dollar terms, the prices of most commodities have declined from their recent peaks amid concerns of an impending global recession, the report documents. From the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 through the end of last month, the price of Brent crude oil in U.S. dollars fell nearly 6 percent. Yet, because of currency depreciations, almost 60 percent of oil-importing emerging-market and developing economies saw an increase in domestic-currency oil prices during this period. Nearly 90 percent of these economies also saw a larger increase in wheat prices in local-currency terms compared to the rise in U.S. dollars.

Elevated prices of energy commodities that serve as inputs to agricultural production have been driving up food prices. During the first three quarters of 2022, food-price inflation in South Asia averaged more than 20 percent. Food price inflation in other regions, including Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa,

Sub-Saharan Africa, and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, averaged between 12 and 15 percent. East Asia and the Pacific has been the only region with low food-price inflation, partly because of broadly stable prices of rice, the region's key staple. *"Although many commodity prices have retreated from their peaks, they are still high compared to their average level over the past five years,"* said **Pablo Saavedra, the World Bank's Vice President for Equitable Growth, Finance, and Institutions.** *"A further spike in world food prices could prolong the challenges of food insecurity across developing countries. An array of policies is needed to foster supply, facilitate distribution, and support real incomes."*

Since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, energy prices have been quite volatile but are now expected to decline. *After surging by about 60 percent in 2022, energy prices are projected to decline 11 percent in 2023.* Despite this moderation, energy prices next year will still be 75 percent above their average over the past five years. The price of Brent crude oil is expected to average \$92 a barrel in 2023—well above the five-year average of \$60 a barrel. Both natural gas and coal prices are projected to ease in 2023 from record highs in 2022. However, by 2024, Australian coal and U.S. natural-gas prices are still expected to be double their average over the past five years, while European natural gas prices could be nearly four times higher. Coal production is projected to significantly increase as several major exporters boost output, putting climate-change goals at risk.

"The combination of elevated commodity prices and persistent currency depreciations translates into higher inflation in many countries," said **Ayhan Kose, Director of the World Bank's Prospects Group and EFI Chief Economist,** which produces the *Outlook* report. *"Policymakers in emerging market and developing economies have limited room to manage the most pronounced global inflation cycle in decades. They need to carefully calibrate monetary and fiscal policies, clearly communicate their plans, and get ready for a period of even higher volatility in global financial and commodity markets."* Agricultural prices are expected to decline 5 percent next year. Wheat prices in the third quarter of 2022 fell nearly 20 percent but remain 24 percent higher than a year ago. The decline in agricultural prices in 2023 reflects a better-than-projected global wheat crop, stable supplies in the rice market, and the resumption of grain exports from Ukraine. Metal prices are projected to decline 15 percent in 2023, largely because of weaker global growth and concerns about a slowdown in China.

The outlook for commodity prices is subject to many risks. *Energy markets face significant supply concerns as worries about the availability of energy during the upcoming winter will intensify in Europe.* Higher-than-expected energy prices could feed through to non-energy prices, especially food, prolonging challenges associated with food insecurity. A sharper slowdown in global growth also presents a key risk, especially for crude oil and metals prices.

“The forecast of a decline in agricultural prices is subject to an array of risks,” said John Baffes, Senior Economist in the World Bank’s Prospects Group. “First, export disruptions by Ukraine or Russia could again interrupt global grain supplies. Second, additional increases in energy prices could exert upward pressure on grain and edible oil prices. Third, adverse weather patterns can reduce yields; 2023 is likely to be the third La Niña year in a row, potentially reducing yields of key crops in South America and Southern Africa.”

Special Focus: Decline in Copper and Aluminum Prices and the Impact on Developing Economies

Concerns about a possible global recession next year have already contributed to a sharp decline in copper and aluminum prices. A **Special Focus** section of the report examines the drivers of aluminum and copper prices and explores implications for emerging market and developing economies that export these commodities. Prices will likely remain volatile as the energy transition unfolds and demand shifts from fossil fuels to renewables, which will benefit some metal producers. Metal exporters can make the most of the resulting opportunities for growth over the medium term while limiting the impact of price volatility by ensuring they have well-designed fiscal and monetary policy frameworks, the report highlights.

From <https://www.worldbank.org/> 10/26/2022

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GCC Economies Expected to Expand by 6.9% in 2022

The economies of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) are projected to expand by 6.9 %in 2022 before moderating to 3.7% and 2.4% in 2023 and 2024, according to the new World Bank Gulf Economic Update (GEU). Easing of pandemic restrictions, and positive developments in the hydrocarbon market drove strong recoveries in 2021 and 2022 across the GCC. Strong economic recovery and supply chain bottlenecks raised inflation in the GCC to an average rate of 2.1% in 2021 — up from 0.8% in 2020. Supported by higher hydrocarbon prices, the GCC region is expected to register strong twin surpluses in 2022 and continue over the medium term. The regional fiscal balance is projected to register a surplus of 5.3% of GDP in 2022 —the first surplus since 2014 — while the external balance surplus is expected to reach 17.2% of GDP.

This issue of the (GEU), titled "Green Growth Opportunities in the GCC," examines the development of the green growth sectors and looks at the potential opportunities this could provide for the GCC countries. The report also discusses GCC countries' plans to decrease the use of fossil fuels to generate electricity, their aims to increase the capacity of renewable energy to power domestic electricity needs, and their goals to enhance the role of the private sector and reduce the role of the public sector. At the same time, it looks at how the climate agenda could be used to further diversify their economies in high growth sectors, including the upstream and downstream

industries for the energy transition.

"There is an excellent and timely opportunity to diversify the economy further using a green growth strategy, and playing a leading role in the global transition to low-carbon economies," said Issam Abousleiman, World Bank Regional Director for the GCC. "The region could use the green growth transition to focus policies on developing green technologies and associated skilled labor that would reverse trends in productivity and enable the region to grow faster." The GCC countries' total GDP is projected to be close to US\$ 2 trillion in 2022. If the GCC continued business as usual, their combined GDP would grow to an expected US\$ 6 trillion by 2050. However, if the GCC countries implemented a green growth strategy that would help and accelerate their economic diversification, GDP could have the potential to grow to over US\$ 13 trillion by 2050.

The special focus section of the report highlights the size of the addressable market for green growth, focusing on the major upstream and downstream sectors of the green economy, including, renewable energy, green buildings, sustainable transport, water management and waste management. In addition, it covers green finance as a critical enabler for new investments. Focusing on green growth in the Gulf region is entirely in line with GCC vision documents that outline an image of the economy of the future that relies increasingly on the private sector playing a leading role in investment, job creation and value addition.

GCC Country Outlooks

Bahrain: Bahrain's economic outlook hangs on oil market prospects and the government's commitment to the reform agenda. Growth is expected to accelerate to 3.8% in 2022; mainly driven by the non-hydrocarbon sector which is expected to exceed 4% growth, supported by the full reopening of the economy and a stronger manufacturing sector. Higher oil prices and resuming spending restraints under FBP are expected to significantly narrow the fiscal deficit to less than 4% of GDP in 2022. The current account balance, which recorded its first surplus in seven years in 2021, is forecasted to improve markedly to reach 11.3% of GDP in 2022 and remain in surplus over the medium term.

Kuwait: Economic growth is forecast to accelerate in 2022 to 8.5% before moderating to 2.5% in 2023 and 2024, respectively. The non-oil sector is anticipated to continue expanding in 2023 following a 7.7% uptick in 2022. More robust demand will be translated into additional upward inflationary pressures, though monetary tightening and decreasing global food prices will moderate inflation in the medium term. The fiscal balance is anticipated to register a surplus of 1.1% of GDP in 2022, with the possibility of a widening surplus (5.9% of GDP) if the newly elected Parliament approves government's proposal to suspend FGF transfer during this fiscal year. Higher oil receipts are expected to more than compensate for the larger imports bill resulting in a significant external balance surplus of 28.6% of GDP in

2022.

Oman: The economy is projected to continue its recovery and strengthen over the medium-term, driven by robust energy prices, expansion of oil and gas production, and wide-ranging structural reforms. GDP growth is forecast to reach 4.5% in 2022 before moderating to an average of 3.2% in 2023-24. The overall fiscal deficit is expected to turn into a surplus of nearly 6% of GDP in 2022—the first surplus in almost a decade—reducing gross financing needs. Similarly, the external balance is swinging back into surplus (6% of GDP in 2022)—the first surplus in 7 years—on the back of higher oil receipts and recovery in non-oil exports.

Qatar: Real GDP is estimated to rise to 4% in 2022 with exports (5.4%) and government consumption (4.8%) leading on the demand side. Growth in private consumption may be slightly below 4.5%, driven by higher interest rates and prices. Consumer prices are projected to increase on average 4.6% this year and to remain a full percentage point above levels recorded last year as far out as 2024. Both the current account and fiscal balance surpluses are projected to widen significantly in 2022 given their dependence on booming hydrocarbon prices—with the former expected to reach 20% of GDP and the latter 6% of GDP during 2022.

Saudi Arabia: Growth is expected to accelerate to 8.3% in 2022 before moderating to 3.7% and 2.3% in 2023 and 2024, respectively. In spite of recent signals for a more cautious approach to OPEC+ planned production, the oil sector will remain the main driver behind this growth with output estimated to grow by 15.5% in 2022. The budget balance should register a surplus of 6.8% of GDP in 2022—the first surplus in nine years—driven by higher oil revenues. Meanwhile, higher oil receipts are expected to more than compensate for the larger imports bill resulting in a significant external balance surplus of 18.8% of GDP in 2022.

United Arab Emirates: Higher oil export volumes coupled with a revival in non-oil demand will support strong economic growth in 2022. This is further supported by a favorable business environment and world-class infrastructure. Real GDP is expected to grow by 5.9% in 2022 before moderating to 4.1% in 2023 as slower global demand dampens growth due to tightening financial conditions. Higher oil receipts supplemented with a gradual non-oil recovery will bolster fiscal revenue resulting in a fiscal surplus to hover around 4.4% of GDP in 2022. Recent bilateral free trade agreements with Asian partners supported by strong oil exports will place the current account surplus at 11.2% of GDP in 2022.

From <https://www.worldbank.org/> 10/31/2022

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Business Calls on APEC Leaders to Exercise Collective Leadership and Take Decisive Action for Recovery and Growth

The chair of the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC) 2022 and chairman of the Federation of Thai Industries Kriengkrai Thiennukul presented ABAC's report to APEC Economic Leaders to Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha, the Chair of APEC 2022. Under Thailand's leadership, ABAC is pursuing a work program with the theme "Embrace. Engage. Enable." to respond to the challenge of maintaining the economic vitality of the Asia-Pacific region and ensure it benefits all. "The report contains ABAC's recommendations to APEC Leaders to meet the unprecedented economic crises faced by the Asia-Pacific region arising from the consequences of the continuing pandemic, geo-political conflict, inflation and supply chain disruptions which impact directly on business, both large and small," said Kriengkrai. "These recommendations will be the basis of our discussions when we meet with APEC Leaders during our annual dialogue on 18 November." The goals of ABAC's recommendations are firstly to speed up the region's economic recovery and secondly to regain the momentum for dynamic, sustainable, inclusive and resilient long-term growth.

Tackling inflation, food insecurity, restrictions on the movement of essential goods and services to tackle the pandemic, as well as the safe reopening of borders to restore economic activity, will be key to speeding recovery. Regaining the momentum for long-term growth will require actions to address the consequences of climate change. It will also require the furthering of regional economic integration by supporting the global rules-based trading system and accelerating the realization of the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific, enhancing support for micro, small and medium enterprises—including women-owned and indigenous businesses—to foster inclusion, encouraging the faster and wider uptake of digital technologies and pursuing fiscal consolidation and structural reform. "All these actions are all fundamental to ensuring that our region will be seamless, dynamic, resilient, and sustainable—and a place where everyone including disadvantaged and under-served groups can enjoy the benefits and opportunities offered by deeper regional economic integration," Kriengkrai concluded. "But this will require even greater collective leadership and decisive action from APEC. We, the business sector, are committed to playing our role in this effort."

From <https://www.apec.org/> 10/12/2022

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ASEAN Meeting Discusses Direction and Roadmap for 5G Deployment

In order to accelerate the implementation of 5G, managers and experts believe it is necessary to promote a regional roadmap and shared standards. The ASEAN Conference on 5G took place within the framework of the Việt Nam International Digital Week, which is organised by the Ministry of Information and Communications in Hà Nội this week. Speaking at the opening of the conference, Deputy Minister of Information and Communications Phan Tâm said that countries in the ASEAN region

had 5G development strategies but were facing infrastructure and information security issues. In particular, the issue of standards for 5G deployment played an important role. Therefore, the co-operation of ASEAN countries to build a 5G roadmap was one of the priority tasks and goals, he noted. Speaking about 5G deployment, a representative from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications of Japan - ASEAN's digital partner said that Japan had set a goal to develop its 5G network with the infrastructure construction covering 97 per cent of the population by 2025, equivalent to 300,000 5G base stations, and 99 per cent coverage by 2030, equivalent to 600,000 5G base stations.

To achieve this goal, Japan allocated frequencies to carriers to develop 5G technology in 2019, from which 5G networks flourished. In addition, Japan also introduced tax exemption and reduction policies to promote companies to develop 5G services. 5G has helped airports deploy autonomous vehicles, solve the problem of labour shortages, or operate automatically to monitor containers at seaports. In addition, in order to speed up the progress, Japan has opened the doors for many sources to participate in infrastructure construction, provided that safety and security are ensured. In particular, Japan chose to deploy Open Ran technology, a mobile communication network architecture that allows networks to be integrated using network elements from many different manufacturers, helping to reduce equipment costs. The representative of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications of Japan said that promoting Open Ran would promote 5G deployment in ASEAN countries. This is also the view that Lê Trường Giang, Director of the 5G Network Centre of Viettel Group, discussed at the conference.

The representative of Viettel said that the deployment of 5G in the world mainly follows two trends: Open Ran and Core. In particular, Open Ran has a breakthrough with compatible devices from each vendor. Viettel uses the common hardware platform under Open Ran and participates in the Open Ran Radio Alliance. Discussing the 5G trend, a Qualcomm representative said that it was necessary to build a mature ecosystem from low frequency to high frequency. Low frequency is used for smart factories. At that time, smart factories can not only apply for production lines but also operation and monitoring. Earlier, in the opening speech of the Việt Nam International Digital Week event, Minister of Information and Communications Nguyễn Mạnh Hùng stated that 5G was a big push for humanity to move to a digital environment. If digital technology is to be promoted, it needed digital infrastructure, which was 5G and cloud computing, he said. ASEAN countries have held their annual 5G conference since 2019. ASEAN is committed to keeping pace with the world in new technologies. "Digital co-operation among ASEAN countries is to create a digital ASEAN. To implement One ASEAN, digital transformation and digital cooperation are the best solutions," said Hùng. Việt Nam wished to sign digital partnership co-operation with ASEAN countries and other countries. Digital partnership collaboration was a new type of partnership, he noted.

From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 10/15/2022

COP27 and the Importance of Climate Change Adaptation to Asia and the Pacific

On 6 November, the global community will gather in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, for the COP27 climate conference. The COP, or 'Conference of the Parties', is the key decision-making forum of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address climate change and its impacts.

Why decisions and outcomes from the COPs are important

Climate change is the critical issue of our lifetime and the past 12 months has provided a stark reminder of the human impacts on climate especially in Asia and the Pacific. Historically devastating flooding in Pakistan, extreme drought in the People's Republic of China, tropical cyclones in the Pacific Islands and typhoons in the Philippines have impacted hundreds of millions of poor, vulnerable people. The reality is that these kinds of weather events caused by climate change will increase in intensity and frequency. Therefore, COP outcomes are particularly important for meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UNFCCC to keep global warming below 1.5°C.

What do we expect from COP27?

At the top of the agenda for COP27 is the need to take action on climate change adaptation, which is an ever-increasing priority for ADB. "We cannot avoid all the impacts of climate change, they are already happening, so we have to focus on building resilience of the most vulnerable communities," said ADB Climate Envoy Warren Evans. COP27 will focus on scaling-up adaptation solutions and mobilizing and strengthening access to financing for adaptation. As Asia and the Pacific's climate bank, ADB raised its ambition for climate change financing for 2019-2030 from \$80 billion to \$100 billion, of which \$34 billion is marked for adaptation. Some recent examples of that commitment to adaptation include a \$1.5 billion loan for Pakistan, under ADB's Building Resilience with Active Countercyclical Expenditures (BRACE) Program, which includes help to promote climate change adaptation following this year's devastating flooding, as well as \$250 million to strengthen climate and disaster resilience in 22 dozen coastal towns in Bangladesh.

What are the key initiatives ADB will bring to COP27?

ADB will launch several flagship initiatives at COP27, including the Asia Pacific Water Resilience Initiative, which will promote resilient water management in the region, as well as the Blue Pacific Finance Hub, which aims to restore ocean health, build coastal resilience, and develop sustainable blue economies. ADB will launch the Just Transition Support Platform to help strengthen ADB's work in the just transition space, which seeks to ensure that the benefits of the shift to low-carbon,

resilient economies are shared equally and no individual, community, or region is left behind.

New approaches in the battle against climate change

ADB is also piloting an Innovative Finance Facility for Climate in Asia and Pacific (IF-CAP), which will use guarantees and grant contributions from donor countries and philanthropies to leverage \$4 for every \$1. IFCAP will be launched next year to help provide much-needed investment for both climate change adaptation and mitigation. “We need to redesign sectoral interventions. Whether it’s agriculture, water, or urban, we need to have a very strong climate focus, to pay attention to what can we do differently to lower the risks of climate impacts to the actual infrastructure or communities, but also to increase the resilience of that infrastructure and those communities,” said Mr. Evans.

“In doing so, we need to strengthen community-based approaches to climate resilience in parallel while scaling-up and accelerating our work on decarbonization, clean energy security, low-carbon and climate resilient cities, and climate resilient food security. This is a huge challenge, but ADB is absolutely committed to play its leading role across Asia and Pacific and with partners across the world. This has to be a collective effort—none of us can achieve what is necessary on our own.” COP27 is taking place at a time of unprecedented challenges worldwide. The global community must come together for a renewed global commitment in Egypt to decarbonize at scale and to greatly expand concessional and grant resources to developing countries which are suffering the most. “It is time to step up and mobilize the kind of resources, with the kind of conditions, that allow countries to really use those resources to adapt to and become more resilient to climate change,” said Mr. Evans.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 10/27/2022

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East Asia

CHINA: Policy Incentives Set to Sustain NEV Boom

China has renewed its policy support for the new-energy vehicle (NEV) sector, a move that experts believe will further fuel an industry that is already in the fast lane. Days ahead of the National Day holiday, usually seen as a peak shopping season, China announced that the purchase tax exemption for NEVs will be extended to the end of 2023. This marks the third extension since the country first implemented the policy in 2014. Based on the selling prices of mainstream new-energy vehicles in the market, experts estimate that the policy will help car buyers save about 10,000 yuan (about 1,408 U.S. dollars), while policymakers expect it to result in 100 billion yuan of taxes waived nationwide. Tax exemption has been proven an effective tool in spurring consumption. In the first seven months of the year, the policy has cut around

40.68 billion yuan in taxes, up 108.5 percent from the previous year, according to the State Administration of Taxation. Experts believe that such a favourable policy will further unleash market demand for NEVs, a sector that has registered rapid expansion in recent years. In the first eight months of this year, a total of 3.86 million NEVs were sold in China, surging about 110 percent year on year, according to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers (CAAM).

Globally, China has ranked first in terms of production and sales for seven straight years since 2015, said Xin Guobin, vice minister of industry and information technology. The boom in China's NEV sector came as the world's second-largest economy rolled out a raft of policy incentives to spur the development of NEVs. Meng Wei, spokesperson for the National Development and Reform Commission, said that China has regarded NEVs as a focal point in the transformation of its automobile industry, putting in place a policy framework that has provided a solid underpinning for its development. One element in the plan is the development guideline for the NEV industry unveiled in 2020. The document listed five main tasks for NEV development from 2021 to 2035, including improving technology innovation capacity, building new-type industry ecosystems and enhancing infrastructure. In addition, more than other 600 supporting policies have been rolled out by central and local governments, covering technological innovation, promotion and application, and security.

Sustained policy incentives have helped the sector achieve breakthroughs in areas such as technology development and market growth, said Shi Jianhua, deputy secretary general of the CAAM. So far, China has established a complete industrial system, with progress made in core technologies such as batteries, motors and controllers, Shi said. Data shows that sales of NEVs in the country topped 11.08 million units as of the end of May, compared with only 20,000 units at the end of 2012. Meng believes there is still great growth potential in China's NEV market, saying that the country is seeing consumption upgrading, with a generation of young consumers who are more receptive to new technologies and products. More policy moves are in the pipeline. According to Meng, China will work to further improve its NEV-related policy system, optimize industrial layout, step up technological innovation and deepen international cooperation in the sector.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 10/03/2022

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ADB to Help Improve Public Health Services in the PRC

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$300 million loan to improve the quality of public health services in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Guizhou Province, and Shaanxi Province, in the People's Republic of China (PRC). While health system development has progressed, the PRC faces complex health challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted gaps and development needs

in the government-led public health system. The pandemic has shown that health facilities are particularly vulnerable to admission surges that can negatively affect patient care and overburden facilities. “This project aims to develop model centers of public health excellence in underdeveloped areas,” said ADB Senior Health Specialist for East Asia Najibullah Habib. “These centers will help deliver essential public health functions and reduce the risks of future public health hazards, including those related to climate change, for vulnerable groups. The high-quality training of public health workers supported by the project’s establishment of regional training centers will provide benefits beyond the project sites, including to neighboring countries.”

The Strengthening Public Health Institutions Building Project aims to protect, promote, and restore the health and well-being of residents; strengthen capacity for early warning, risk reduction, and management of health security risks; and strengthen prevention and control of major communicable diseases. Public health institutional capacity and policies will be developed through emergency preparedness and contingency planning, capacity building of the public health workforce, and establishment of modern health management information systems. The project will also establish an integrated public health ecosystem, which includes an antimicrobial resistance surveillance system, laboratory support for the detection of emerging infectious diseases, training of public health workers, especially women, and the establishment and upgrading of hospital facilities. The project will also enhance international cooperation capability through training to promote gender equality and establishing regional knowledge cooperation programs. The total project cost is \$631 million, with \$331 million in counterpart financing from the government. The project is expected to be completed in 2027.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 10/06/2022

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China Tax and Fee Incentives a Strong Boost to Economy

China has ramped up its tax and fee incentives and supporting policies to enterprises, a move that has not only offered a "timely rain" to companies in financial drought but also served as a shot in the arm for the economy. Official data from the State Taxation Administration showed that China's tax refunds as well as tax and fee cuts and deferrals had exceeded 3.4 trillion yuan (about 478 billion U.S. dollars) by Sept. 20. The total consists of approximately 2.21 trillion yuan worth of value-added tax credits that had been refunded to taxpayers, 591.6 billion yuan of tax and fee cuts, and 632.6 billion yuan of deferred tax and fee payments. The combined tax and fee incentives have been vital in bailing out businesses in difficulty. A waste management firm based in Ji'an City of Jiangxi Province in the east of China, for instance, had been seeing negative profit margins before May, according to the company's financial chief Zhang Leshan. However, after receiving a tax rebate of 10.48 million yuan in May and an exemption of 160,500 yuan that was refunded to its account, the

company's monthly profits have rebounded to positive territory and reached 2.86 million yuan.

Zhang also said that the company's monthly operating costs have lowered 5.3 percent. "It is estimated that the company would see a 25-percent yearly increase in whole-year business revenue." Animal husbandry firm Zhonghong Sanrong Group Co., Ltd. enjoyed a tax refund totaling about 500,000 yuan in July. "We used the money to purchase soybean pulp, brown rice and other raw materials for broiler feed. After three months, the chickens were sold at a good price and farmers have reaped a harvest," said Sang Shujun, the legal representative of the company. A survey by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed that 90 percent of firms that received tax refunds since the policy was implemented believed that their cash flow had improved. On top of these inclusive tax and fee incentives, an executive meeting of China's State Council last week decided to temporarily defer payments of certain government-levied charges and deposits to further ease the burden on market entities, especially micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, self-employed households and manufacturing firms.

Li Xuhong, a senior researcher with the Beijing National Accounting Institute, said that the tax and fee policies implemented in 2022 mainly center on support for key enterprises, such as the sci-tech, manufacturing and micro, small and medium-sized firms, and aim to precisely "drip irrigate" market entities experiencing financial strain. As policies and measures to stabilize the economy continue to take effect, and the negative effects of heatwaves wane, China's purchasing managers' index (PMI) for the manufacturing sector has bounced back to expansion territory, according to NBS figures. The PMI for the manufacturing sector came in at 50.1 in September, above the boom-bust line of 50, and up from 49.4 in August. Data showed that the confidence of manufacturing companies 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. "The foundations of economic recovery will be further consolidated, as supporting policies continue to take effect," said Fu Linghui, an NBS official.

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Improving Logistics Indexes Reflect China's Economic Recovery

Multiple logistics indexes have recently reversed their downward trajectories with improvements in market demand and business operations, indicating China's economic engine is on track to make a comeback thanks to concerted pro-growth policies. During last week's national holiday, China's express delivery firms were swamped with orders, handling more than 4.1 billion parcels in total, the State Post Bureau said on Saturday. An industry index shows the country's courier market bounced back from its previous lows to become brisk in September, a usually

buoyant month. The China express delivery development index, a measure of overall express delivery business activities and trends, came in at 353.1 last month, up 13.5 percent month on month. The e-commerce logistics index reversed August's contraction to climb to 108.1, close to this year's high of 108.9 logged in February, according to a survey jointly conducted by the China Federation of Logistics and Purchasing (CFLP) and e-commerce giant JD.com.

And improvements are not limited to the e-commerce sector. The index tracking the country's logistics market performance stood at 50.6 percent in September, up 4.3 percentage points from August, reversing a two-month losing streak, according to the CFLP. Hu Han, a researcher at the China Logistics Information Center, attributed to the rebound to the implementation of macro policies, the steady recovery of household consumption, rapid growth in energy and logistics, as well as the restoration of the logistics supply capacity. Most sub-indexes edged up last month. The sub-index for new orders came in at 50.1 percent, up 3.2 percentage points from August, indicating an increase in orders and the recovery of demand in the logistics market, said He Hui, assistant president of the CFLP. The country's logistics infrastructure was smooth overall in September, Hu said, noting the strong resilience of the e-commerce express network as indicated by the rapid recovery of business volume and new order sub-indexes.

Due to increases in orders and revenues, the profitability of enterprises of varying sizes showed signs of improvement, Hu said, adding that firms' performances in the third quarter were significantly stronger than in the previous quarter. "As policies to stabilize the economy and support enterprises gradually took effect, business operations in the logistics sector have seen overall improvement," Hu said. This year, China unveiled a package of measures to tackle COVID-induced disruptions and coordinate pandemic control. In late September, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang urged policy implementation and called for efforts to guarantee smooth logistics and the steady supply of coal and electricity. Looking ahead, analysts say that complicated international economic situations, resurgences of COVID-19 cases in several regions and feeble demand may combine to weigh on logistics operations in the fourth quarter.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 10/09/2022

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China's Income Growth Keeps Pace with Decade's Economic Expansion

China's resident income growth has basically kept pace with the country's economic growth in the past decade, and the income gap between urban and rural residents has narrowed, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said Tuesday. China's per capita disposable income stood at 35,128 yuan (about 4,940 U.S. dollars) in 2021, up 112.8 percent from 2012. It brought the average annual nominal growth rate to 8.8

percent in the past decade. After deducting price factors, the average annual real growth rate was 6.6 percent, basically in line with the expanding economy, the NBS said. The income gap between urban and rural residents has narrowed in the past decade. In 2021, the per capita disposable income of urban residents was 47,412 yuan, an increase of 96.5 percent over 2012. The per capita disposable income of rural residents was 18,931 yuan, an increase of 125.7 percent over 2012. From 2013 to 2021, the average annual income growth rate of rural residents was 1.7 percentage points higher than that of urban residents. Consumption capacity has expanded in the past decade.

In 2021, the per capita consumption expenditure of Chinese residents was about 24,100 yuan, up 99.9 percent from 2012 in nominal terms, or 8 percent on an average annual basis. After deducting price factors, the growth rate stood at 67.4 percent in real terms or 5.9 percent on an average annual basis. The Engel's coefficient has dropped gradually. In 2021, China's per capita expenditure on food, tobacco, and alcohol was 7,178 yuan, an increase of 80.2 percent over 2012, or 6.8 percent on an average annual basis. The proportion of food, tobacco, and alcohol expenditure in consumption expenditure (Engel's coefficient) dropped from 33 percent in 2012 to 29.8 percent in 2021, down 3.2 percentage points.

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China's Modernization Drive and Its Global Inspiration

In its unprecedented stride toward modernization, China has worked the twin miracles of rapid economic development and long-term social stability. While these achievements have amazed the global community, they have also made real differences to a world battling against headwinds from an unprecedented pandemic, flare-ups of regional conflicts and global economic stagnation. Observers worldwide believe that the Chinese path to modernization, especially its guiding philosophies, is inspiring other nations to seek their own development paths and the world to pursue a shared brighter future.

PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

Modernizing a country home to 1.4 billion people is a profound event in human history. Global observers have attributed China's success to the people-centered philosophy of the Communist Party of China (CPC). This is well illustrated by China's massive poverty alleviation campaign. China announced in 2021 that the country had lifted the final 98.99 million impoverished rural residents living under the current poverty line out of poverty, and removed all 832 impoverished counties and 128,000 villages from the poverty list. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres once commented that China's great achievements in poverty reduction constitute "the biggest contribution for dramatical reduction of poverty." "China has a good experience in dealing with poverty," said Collen Vixen Kelapile, president of the

United Nations Economic and Social Council. "It's something that we need to congratulate the (Chinese) leadership for delivering for the Chinese people and hope that all of us can learn from that achievement," he said.

And over the past four decades, people's lives in China have been dramatically improved. A primarily agricultural country about 70 years ago, China now boasts the world's most extensive social welfare system, the largest high-speed railway network and cutting-edge technologies in many sectors. The success of the CPC "comes from a constant adaptation of the party to the needs of the people and to the reality of the world at large," said Jean Christophe Iseux von Pfetten, president of the Institute for East-West Strategic Studies in Britain. The CPC is "a party of people," Pfetten said. "And the party evolves and moves with the evolution of the people."

A COMPREHENSIVE MODERNIZATION

China has been pursuing modernization in a comprehensive way. It has coordinated material and cultural-ethical progress, promoted economic, political, cultural, social and ecological development, and adhered to a new development philosophy that highlights innovation, coordination, greenness, openness and sharing. When illustrating the features of China's modernization, Chinese President Xi Jinping noted that the country's modernization benefits a large population. It features common prosperity, coordinated material and cultural-ethical progress, harmony between humanity and nature, and peaceful development. China's modernization pursues prosperity for all. In this aspect, east China's Zhejiang Province has become an exemplar as the region is building a demonstration zone for common prosperity by launching pairing-up arrangement between the developed coastal areas and the underdeveloped mountainous areas so as to bridge the gap between rural and urban regions.

"Lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets." China's modernization drive also places high emphasis on seeking harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature. The country has cut its carbon emission intensity by 34.4 percent over the past 10 years, and pledged to have CO2 emissions peak before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2060. Noting "environmental protection has been integrated into all of the country's socio-economic development plans," Neak Chandarith, director of the Cambodia 21st Century Maritime Silk Road Research Center, said, "with strong economic strength, advanced technological capability and high responsibility, China has played a leading role in combating global climate change."

PEACEFUL DEVELOPMENT

Peaceful development has also distinguished China's modernization from that of the West. In contrast with Western colonialists who resorted to wars, and aggressions in the late 19th century, China has marched toward modernization through relentless hard work, and blazed a trail of win-win cooperation on the world stage. By following

the path of peaceful development, China has grown into a global economic powerhouse, contributing to a steady eastward shifting of the world's center of economic gravity. "With peace, a country enjoys prosperity, just as with rain, the land can flourish," Xi quoted a proverb in Uzbekistan when addressing the 22nd meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in September. Christopher Mutsvangwa, an official of Zimbabwe's ruling ZANU-PF party, said what is valuable is that China's economic growth during the past four decades is accompanied by its adherence to a peaceful development path, which is different from the rise of a new major country in the past that was always characterized by warfare. In the eyes of Martin Jacques, a British scholar, instead of advocating the jungle law of nation-states, where the writ of the strongest reigns supreme, "China propounds new forms of global collaboration," as exemplified by the Belt and Road Initiative and the idea of a community with a shared future for mankind, as the way of the future.

A SHARED FUTURE

On its path toward modernization, China has also been sharing its development opportunities with the rest of the world, upholding true multilateralism and striving for a more fair and equitable global governance system, which offers Chinese solutions to pressing challenges facing humanity. That is because Beijing fully understands that China will do well only when the world does well, and vice versa. From initiating the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the New Development Bank to taking the lead in implementing the UN sustainable development agenda, China has always been a builder of world peace, a contributor to global development, a defender of the international order and a provider of public goods. Making the Chinese vaccines a global public good is a good example of China's efforts to build a community with a shared future for mankind. China has provided more than 2.2 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines to over 120 countries and international organizations.

Vinnie Molina, national president of the Communist Party of Australia, said China's development is in line with the interests of the world and that the CPC is committed to promoting peace, cooperation, mutual respect and development for a shared future. He also commended China for providing COVID vaccines to the world. "Millions of people could benefit out of the Chinese biotechnology." The Global Development Initiative (GDI) and the Global Security Initiative (GSI), proposed by Xi, have further added to China's efforts to contribute to world peace and shared prosperity.

The GDI and the GSI are crucial to building a more just and equitable global governance system, said Joseph Matthews, a senior professor at the BELTEI International University in Phnom Penh. "The two initiatives are also key to reinforcing multilateralism, international cooperation and solidarity in order to address global challenges and concerns," he said. "More than just achieving modernization, China is actually overcoming the mistakes and consequences of the

Western type of modernization. That means China is offering an example to the whole world," wrote Boris Tadic, former president of Serbia, in a recent opinion piece. China's success serves the interests of the whole world and the CPC has offered the world a different model, which could be an option for developing countries, said former Egyptian Prime Minister Essam Sharaf.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 10/15/2022

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Chinese Taipei Contributes to Inclusive and Sustainable Growth Initiatives

Chinese Taipei has contributed USD 2.2 million in funding to support APEC's economic and technical cooperation initiatives with respect to members' capacity building needs and to promote regional economic integration, inclusive and sustainable growth and enhance APEC's policy research and analysis. The contribution was confirmed in a memorandum of understanding signed virtually by Sharon Shang-Nien Wu, Chinese Taipei's APEC Senior Official and Dr Rebecca Sta Maria, Executive Director of the APEC Secretariat, last week. "Chinese Taipei is committed to continuing our engagement in APEC as well as contributing to strengthen APEC's economic and technical cooperation initiatives," Wu said. "We also wish to reaffirm our commitment to advancing APEC members' capacity building needs and promoting inclusive and sustainable growth, especially in the areas of digital innovation, small and medium enterprises and marine debris management," she added.

Projects are a vital part of the APEC process. They help translate the policy directions of APEC economic leaders and ministers into actions which contribute to creating tangible benefits for people living in the Asia-Pacific region. APEC provides funding for over 100 projects each year, with around USD 21.9 million available in 2022. Around USD 1 million of the contribution will go to efforts to improve the growth of the digital economy in the region as well as to build inclusive economies by focusing on micro, small and medium enterprises' poverty reduction. This would include supporting activities under the purview of the APEC Small and Medium Enterprises Working Group.

Additional funding will be directed to supporting APEC's activities focused on reducing marine debris. This includes initiatives related to improving management of land and sea-based sources and promoting the development of technical and financial innovations to prevent and reduce such pollution. Funding will also support the APEC Policy Support Unit, the research and analysis arm for member economies. "The challenges that we're facing as a region are unprecedented and because of this, APEC needs to forge ahead and strengthen our cooperation to ensure an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future for the people," Dr Sta Maria explained. "The core of APEC is the sharing of experiences and best practices among member economies,

exploring new ideas and nurturing collaboration that will benefit all," she concluded. "Support for capacity building initiatives focusing on sustainability and inclusive growth will contribute to a resilient future, and mitigate against the uncertainties we are facing today."

From <https://www.apec.org/> 10/21/2022

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China's Economy on More Solid Ground with Steady Q3 Growth

China's economy is on more solid ground in the third quarter of this year with major indicators showing positive signs of stabilization, backed by the country's efforts to balance epidemic control and economic and social development. The country's gross domestic product (GDP) grew 3.9 percent year on year to 30.76 trillion yuan (about 4.32 trillion U.S. dollars) in the third quarter, 3.5 percentage points higher than that in the second quarter, data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed Monday. In the first three quarters, the country's GDP increased 3 percent year on year, 0.5 percentage points faster than that in the first half of 2022, according to the NBS data. Many major economic indicators saw significant improvements compared with that in the second quarter, with production demand gradually recovering, and prices and employment remaining stable, the NBS said in a statement.

A breakdown of Monday's data showed that value-added industrial output by major industrial firms jumped 4.8 percent year on year in the third quarter, 4.1 percentage points faster than that in the second quarter. With economic activities generally perking up, China's consumer market has warmed up in the third quarter. The country's total retail sales of consumer goods ticked up 3.5 percent year on year in the third quarter, reversing the 4.6-percent decline logged in the second quarter. Fixed-asset investment sustained growth momentum in the third quarter, rising 5.7 percent from the same period a year earlier, up 1.5 percentage points from the second quarter. During the January-September period, investment in the manufacturing sector climbed 10.1 percent year on year while investment in high-tech manufacturing and services continued rapid expansion, rising 23.4 percent and 13.4 percent, respectively.

"Generally speaking, the Chinese economy has managed to overcome negative impacts inflicted by unexpected factors, with major indicators staying within a reasonable range and positive factors accumulating," the NBS said. This decent growth did not come easily with policymakers unveiling a slew of supportive policies to shore up the economy. China's State Council unveiled an additional 19 follow-up policies in August on top of delivering a policy package for stabilizing the economy in May in order to shape greater synergy. Among these measures to facilitate economic stability are China's ramped-up efforts to expand its tax and fee incentives and supportive policies to enterprises, offering a "timely rain" to companies in financial drought. Official data from the State Taxation Administration showed that China's tax

refunds, as well as tax and fee cuts and deferrals, had exceeded 3.4 trillion yuan by Sept. 20.

Despite increasing external uncertainties, Chinese entrepreneurs and bankers became more upbeat about the macroeconomy, and urban residents were more optimistic about future income and jobs in the third quarter, recent central bank surveys have found. Both the entrepreneurs' and bankers' macroeconomic heat indexes, reflecting the two groups' views on the current macroeconomic situation, climbed quarter on quarter, according to the People's Bank of China. However, the NBS warned that the global situation is still complex and grim, and that the foundation of economic recovery is not solid, stressing the importance of the full implementation of supporting measures. Looking into the future, China will pool endeavors to support market entities and stabilize employment and prices, while expanding the effective demand and consolidating the foundation of economic recovery and development, to keep the economy operating within a proper range and work for the best results possible, the NBS statement said.

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China's Industrial Recovery Gaining Steam Despite Profits Dip

China's industrial economy is showing more positive signs of recovery despite a profit decline in the first nine months of this year. Major industrial firms, each with an annual business revenue of at least 20 million yuan (2.79 million U.S. dollars), saw their profits down 2.3 percent year on year in the first nine months to 6.24 trillion yuan, data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed Thursday. In September, the profit decline of the major industrial firms narrowed by 6 percentage points from a month earlier, the data showed. The combined revenues of industrial firms sustained relatively quick growth during the period, rising 8.2 percent year on year to 100.17 trillion yuan. Highlighting the improvement in business profit structure, the bureau's senior statistician Zhu Hong noted that the performance of industrial firms was gaining recovery momentum as the country's pro-growth policies took effect.

A total of 19 out of 41 major industries saw growth in profits in the January-September period. Equipment manufacturing returned to growth with a 0.6 percent increase year on year, led by the electrical machinery sector, which saw its profits surge 25.3 percent. Automobile manufacturing achieved profit growth of 47.4 percent year on year in September, boosted by smooth industrial and supply chains and production growth of the new energy vehicles, Zhu said. Due partly to rising demands for electricity and slower growth in coal prices, the profits of electricity firms rose 11.4 percent in the January-September period, reversing the decline that had lasted for more than a year, Zhu noted. The mining sector continued to witness soaring profits, driven by high prices in commodities, Zhu said.

Zhu also pointed out that the operation of private and small businesses kept improving, with their profits up 1.5 percent year on year during the period. Thursday's data also showed that the total assets of industrial firms stood at 152.64 trillion yuan at the end of September, up 9.5 percent from a year earlier. Despite the positive changes, Zhu still cautioned against challenges, including relatively high costs for businesses and a complex external environment. To consolidate the recovery momentum of the industrial economy, more efforts should be put into shoring up the real economy, efficiently coordinating epidemic prevention and control with economic and social development, and advancing the implementation of pro-growth policies and measures, Zhu said.

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ADB to Support Sustainable Agriculture in Yellow River Basin, PRC

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$157 million loan to improve sustainable agricultural production systems in the Yellow River basin in the People's Republic of China (PRC). The Yellow River Basin Green Farmland and High-Quality Agriculture Development Project will support sustainable agriculture development by enabling environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient agricultural production practices that balance food production with environmental protection and rehabilitation. It will also strengthen agricultural value chains for vital rural agribusiness. Although it has been a historic cultural and economic hub for the PRC, the Yellow River basin faces increasing challenges to balance the needs of the economy, ecology, and community, while striving to meet its sustainable development potential. ADB initiated the Yellow River Ecological Corridor (YREC) program in 2021 to protect and restore the Yellow River basin's diverse aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, promoting poverty reduction, climate resilience, and improved food security.

"An integrated approach is needed to improve ecosystem services and socioeconomic conditions in the Yellow River basin, including strengthening institutions, enacting policy reforms, and leveraging private sector solutions," said ADB Senior Natural Resources Economist for East Asia Jan Hinrichs. "The project will also bolster knowledge sharing throughout the region on green farmland construction and institutional reforms in the YREC." To build climate-resilient farming processes, the project will invest in developing medium- to high-quality farmland and providing equipment and facilities that support sustainable and modern farming practices. The project will also put in place waste management systems for agriculture plastic film, fertilizer and pesticide packaging, and enhance ecological conservation of farmland, water, and soil resources. The project will also stabilize and strengthen agricultural value chains by facilitating improved cooperation between farmers and agribusiness, upgrading infrastructure and facilities such as

warehouses and cold storage, and improving agricultural systems and processes for increased production efficiency. The total cost of the project is \$355.8 million, with \$198.8 million in counterpart financing from the beneficiaries and the government. It is expected to be completed in 2028.

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China to Redouble Efforts to Develop Digital Economy

China will redouble its efforts to develop the digital economy, the State Council said in a report submitted to the ongoing session of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee for review Friday. Over the past decade, China's digital economy has witnessed remarkable development, the report said, noting that its scale has ranked second in the world for years, and the digital economy has played an increasingly important role in supporting economic and social development. In 2021, China's trade via cross-border e-commerce stood at nearly 2 trillion yuan (about 279 billion U.S. dollars), data from the report showed. The country has so far signed the Digital Silk Road memorandums of understanding for cooperation with 16 countries and advanced the Silk Road E-commerce bilateral cooperation mechanism with 24 countries.

However, the report pointed out that there is still room for improvement in the sector's strength and quality. Work shall be done in areas including achieving breakthroughs in core technologies, building digital infrastructure, and promoting the development of digital industries and the digital transformation of traditional industries. The report also called for improving digital public services, enhancing the governance of the digital economy, stepping up network and data security protection, and actively participating in global cooperation in the digital economy. The report expects that China will strive to form a unified, fair, competitive, orderly, mature, and complete modern market system for the digital economy by 2035. The report predicts China would rank among the world leaders in terms of the digital economy's development foundation and industrial system.

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JAPAN: Ranking Record Low 29th for Global Digital Competitiveness

Japan ranked a record low for global digital competitiveness among 63 economies across the world in 2022, falling one place from a year earlier to 29th as the country struggles from a shortage of skilled digital workers, according to a Swiss institute. Denmark was ranked top for the first time after climbing three spots from the previous year, followed by the United States and Sweden, according to an annual report by the International Institute for Management Development. The survey, which

the institute launched in 2017, analyzes 54 factors focusing on knowledge, technology and future readiness to ascertain a country's digital competitiveness. Japan lagged behind its Asian counterparts, with Singapore in fourth place, up from fifth the previous year, while South Korea climbed four spots to place eighth. Hong Kong ranked ninth, followed by Taiwan in 11th and China in 17th, according to the survey.

Japan ranked worst, placing 63rd, in four criteria such as international experience and business agility, but was in first place for student to teacher ratio. The world's third-largest economy was placed second in three criteria including wireless broadband. "This ranking describes the importance of national factors in explaining the digital transformation of companies and the adoption of digital practices by citizens," said Arturo Bris, director of the IMD's World Competitiveness Center. The report listed a number of challenges Japan faces, including its rapidly aging population and a "new form of capitalism" that Prime Minister Fumio Kishida is advocating with an emphasis on wealth distribution.

From <https://nordot.app> 10/08/2022

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Slow Cloud Migration Hinders Digital Transformation in Japan

Japan is lagging other countries in cloud computing, with related investment accounting for only 4% of all information technology spending in 2021 -- a third that of North America -- and the gap is growing. Cloud services have been slow to gain traction in Japan as many businesses cling to proprietary systems, a tendency that has seriously hampered digital transformation in the country. The most common type of cloud computing is public cloud services, which enable users to access software applications and other tools without developing their own IT infrastructure, as the services are rendered through data centers operated by third-party providers. Once the systems break down, however, users cannot fix them themselves. Companies around the world are taking advantage of the cost-effectiveness of cloud computing to facilitate digital transformation. "Cloud services have enabled companies to speed up product and other development," said Hiroyuki Nakayama, a partner at PwC Consulting. The services have allowed users to tap into cutting-edge technologies, including artificial intelligence and big data analysis.

From <https://www.newsonjapan.com> 10/10/2022

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Japan Govt Vows to Recover Tourism, Economy

The Japanese government reiterated its commitment to recovering tourism and the broader economy from the COVID-19 pandemic on Tuesday when the country started a nationwide travel discount campaign and relaxed its border control measures drastically. Kishida told officials to draw up a basic plan to boost tourism

demand by the end of next March that will cover a period between fiscal 2023 and fiscal 2025, when the western Japan city of Osaka will host the World Expo. "We'll create a sustainable economic society by overcoming the pandemic and revitalizing the regional economy," Kishida said. He reiterated his goal of achieving 5 trillion yen in annual spending by foreign visitors to Japan as soon as possible. Kishida also instructed officials to include tourism boosting measures in the government's planned economic package to be compiled by the end of this month

From <https://www.nippon.com> 10/11/2022

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AI Helping Japanese Convenience Stores Profit from Reduced Waste

In a bid to increase sales and reduce food waste, more and more of Japan's convenience stores and supermarkets are letting artificial intelligence analyze data such as past sales figures to decide what discounts to apply to perishable products. At about 3 p.m., in a branch of the Lawson convenience store chain in Tokyo's Shinjuku Ward, an in-store computer decides which food products should be discounted and by how much. A display read "assorted sandwiches, one, 20 yen discount," another, "crispy ham and lettuce sandwiches, three, 30 yen discount." A manager then printed out price tags and made the rounds, affixing them to products. Eight assorted sandwiches lined the shelf, but only one, approaching its use-by time, was discounted. In 2015, Lawson Inc, one of Japan's largest convenience store chains, introduced a system in which the AI at its head office advises store managers and experienced staff on product management at all stores. To calculate how far to cut prices, the software considers a store's sales, delivery times and the local weather conditions to propose a price that gives the product the best chance at being sold.

Until now, store managers have been making reductions based on experience, but leaving it to human judgment was leading to instances of undiscounted stock going to waste or items selling out. To curb this, the AI reviews some 270 product types four times a day. The system has led to improved business performance for the group. In 2021, in the six prefectures comprising northeast Japan's Tohoku region, the gross profit per store rose by 0.6 percent, while the cost incurred from wasted products was down 2.5 percent. It has since expanded further, with 162 Lawson outlets in the capital adopting the system between June and September this year. The company intends to begin a full national rollout in fiscal 2023. Major supermarket chain Aeon Retail Co has also developed an AI discounting system which was implemented at about 350 stores by the end of September. The system analyzes the sales performance of each store and works to price in-store-prepared products at a level that ensures they are sold by closing time.

At Aeon's Funabashi branch in Chiba Prefecture, staff use a portable device to scan

barcodes of the remaining items on the deli produce shelves at 5 p.m. each day. When a university student who works part-time there checked the 200-yen rolled Japanese-style omelet, the device displayed "18" -- meaning, at 5 p.m., if there are 18 omelets left, they presumably will sell out by the 11 p.m. closing time. There were 24 omelets on the shelf at that moment so the employee entered "24 omelets" and sent the data to the centralized system. It instantly calculated a blanket 10 percent discount for the omelets and spooled out the 180 yen price tags. The system's introduction seems to have been a welcome addition, with one official at Aeon Retail praising it for having "ended the practice of needing to make huge discounts right before closing time."

From <https://japantoday.com> 10/31/2022

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Japan to Raise Nursing Care Insurance Premiums for Rich Elderly

Japan's welfare ministry said Monday it plans to raise nursing care insurance premiums for high-income earners aged 65 or over. The ministry also said it plans to expand the scope of nursing care service users who pay 20-30 pct of fees out of their pockets, instead of 10 pct in principle. Those plans are designed to make the country's nursing care insurance program sustainable as costs are swelling due to a rapidly aging population. The ministry put forward the plans at a working group meeting of the Social Security Council, which advises the welfare minister. It will flesh out the details of the plans later this year for once-every-three-years nursing care insurance reform that is next scheduled for fiscal 2024.

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SOUTH KOREA: Presidential Office to Launch Cybersecurity Task Force amid Kakao Outage

The presidential National Security Office will launch an interagency task force to deal with cybersecurity issues following last weekend's massive disruption to top mobile messenger KakaoTalk's service, the presidential office said Monday. National Security Adviser Kim Sung-han will head the task force and preside over meetings with senior officials from the science and defense ministries, the National Intelligence Service, the prosecution, the police and the Defense Security Support Command, to check cybersecurity conditions, deputy presidential spokesperson Lee Jae-myung told reporters. The decision was made at a weekly meeting between President Yoon Suk-yeol and his senior secretaries earlier in the day, Lee said. KakaoTalk, South Korea's top mobile messenger, ground to a halt on Saturday afternoon after a fire broke out at a data center used by its operator Kakao Corp. The fire caused a server outage that suspended everything from everyday communication on KakaoTalk to ride-hailing and public services tied to the app.

Expanded Demand for Service Robots Opens Up New Market for Bigwave Robotics

Until recently, the robot market has been largely comprised of large, expensive industrial robots with fixed arms and manipulators used primarily for production and distribution of goods. Major customers for those industrial or factory robots are carmakers, electronics producers and metal and machinery manufacturing companies. However, the yearslong COVID-19 pandemic and rapid aging in South Korea, which intensified a labor shortage in the service sector, have been creating new demand for smaller and cheaper robots used in restaurants and coffee shops. Kim Min-kyo, CEO of Bigwave Robotics Inc., said his online robot-as-a-service (RaaS) platform, Marosol, focuses on the changing industrial landscape. "Robotics automation has been long used by large manufacturing companies or mid-sized firms, but the market is now expanding," he said in an interview with Yonhap News Agency last week. "But its entry barrier is still very high and Marosol can lower it." Marosol, an AI-powered robotics automation matching service, efficiently matches supply and demand companies for robots. It helps clients implement optimal robotic solutions to become more cost-competitive, while robot producing firms are encouraged to be more consumer-centric.

He said his clients are small merchants or mom-and-pop owners who want to hire robot waiters, cooks and security guards to adapt to the non face-to-face service trend and tackle a labor shortage. Without Marosol, it takes a long time for the small-sized businesses to decide on the best robotics solutions after meeting people from several supplying companies, he added. Some give up due to the time-consuming preparation. "The robot market involves information asymmetries," he said. "Some business people want to buy a set of robots but they have to do it on their own from a market survey to price bargaining. It takes a long time. At the same time, suppliers don't know how many new clients are out there waiting to buy the system." He said more than 50 percent of Marosol's clients are small- and mid-sized enterprises and another 24 percent are business people from the service sector. Along with the list of 500 robotic products and the supply-demand matching service, Marosol also offers financing programs such as lease, loan, and installment for the funds required for the introduction of cooperative robots, along with post-treatment service.

In particular, its archive of videos of robots successfully operating in stores, restaurants and logistics firms is the most trusted corner for potential robot buyers. "CEOs of small service and logistics firms want to see videos of precedent cases," said Kim. "Our video database is appealing to them." Since launching the service in early 2021, Marosol now showcases 2,500 real-life successful examples of robotic

solutions in video footage. Recently, Marosol launched a new platform for trading second-hand robots, the first used-robot market in the country. "Demand for used robots is larger than expected," said Kim. "We opened the second-hand market in August, and 10 transactions have been made since then." Kim said he hopes Marosol plays a role in popularizing the robot market where all customers, even a small restaurant owner, can easily purchase robotic arms to fry fast food, like French fries and chicken wings. "For popularization of a product, all related processes ranging from manufacturing, logistics and service should be vendible and accessible," he said. "I want to create the new eco-system for robotic goods."

From <https://en.yna.co.kr> 10/21/2022

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Yoon Vows to Contribute to Global Fight Against Infectious Diseases

President Yoon Suk-yeol said Tuesday that South Korea will contribute to the global fight against infectious diseases by sharing vaccines and further investing in their development and treatments. Yoon made the remark during the opening of the inaugural World Bio Summit co-hosted by South Korea and the World Health Organization, saying the COVID-19 pandemic of the last three years has united countries around the common goal of protecting people's lives. "We must all reflect on the lessons of solidarity and cooperation beyond national borders in order to prepare against future crises of infectious diseases and health," he said during the event at a Seoul hotel. "Solidarity and cooperation between countries that is based on a common vision, as well as technological innovations, will protect the health of the people of the world and bring prosperity to mankind."

Yoon said South Korea is doing its best to develop vaccine and treatment technologies, and nurture the bio health industry, with plans to build a research and development regime for new and rare diseases, and increase financial support through the establishment of a bio investment fund. He said his country will work closely with governments, international organizations and global enterprises as part of that effort. Yoon also listed the contributions his administration has made so far to global health initiatives, including a pledge of US\$300 million toward the Access to COVID-19 Tools-Accelerator Initiative and \$30 million to the Financial Intermediary Fund of the World Bank.

"This year, the Republic of Korea succeeded in developing a COVID-19 vaccine and will contribute to ensuring fair access to vaccines by providing the produced vaccines to countries that need them," he said. "The Republic of Korea will defend the freedom of the people of the world through technological innovations, and based on a firm spirit of solidarity, actively take part in the international community's efforts to strengthen the global health regime," he added. The two-day summit opened with the participation of some 300 people, including Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari,

health ministers from Nigeria, Thailand, Tunisia and El Salvador, former U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Jerome Kim, director general of the International Vaccine Institute. Business executives in attendance included Morena Makhoana, CEO of Biovac; Petro Terblanche, managing director of Afrigen; and Ahn Jae-yong, CEO of SK bioscience.

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NORTH KOREA: Hacking Group May Have Stolen Crypto in Cyberattack

The North Korean state-sponsored hacking group Lazarus is believed to have stolen cryptocurrency from domestic crypto asset trading services in cyberattacks, the National Police Agency's commissioner general said Thursday. The agency's new cybercrime investigation unit, established in April, has found that domestic operators were targeted by the group, and attacks are expected to continue, Yasuhiro Tsuyuki said in a regular press conference. "We are concerned that individuals may be harmed as well, as transactions have been occurring between individuals and not limited to business operators," he said. The Japanese government on Oct. 14 issued a warning to individual traders and crypto services regarding potential cyberattacks from Lazarus. It was the first instance since the cybercrime unit was established that a country or organization believed to be involved in an attack was publicly disclosed and criticized in the hope it will deter or prevent further action. Lazarus is believed to have stolen some \$400 million worth of crypto assets in 2021, according to U.S. blockchain analysis firm Chainalysis. The company said last month it worked with law enforcement and industry organizations to seize over \$30 million of cryptocurrencies stolen by North Korean-linked hackers.

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South-East Asia

MALAYSIA: Average Monthly Salaries, Wages Rise 3.5 Pct in 2021

The average monthly salaries and wages in Malaysia rebounded by 3.5 percent to register 3,037 ringgit (654 U.S. dollars) in 2021, official reports showed Tuesday. The median monthly salaries and wages in Malaysia accelerated by 9.1 percent to 2,250 ringgit (484 U.S. dollars) in 2021 as compared to the previous year, the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) said in its salaries and wages survey report. According to the report, the rise in median and average monthly salaries and wages was partly due to the continuous resumption of economic and social activities during the second half of the year. In 2021, the number of salaries and wages recipients rose by 3.4 percent to record 9.7 million people.

From <https://english.news.cn/> 10/04/2022

Malaysia's Unemployment Rate Remains Unchanged at 3.7 Pct in August

Malaysia's unemployment rate in August remained unchanged at 3.7 percent as compared to July, official data showed Tuesday. The number of unemployed persons sustained its downward trend, falling 1.4 percent to 612,000 persons from 620,700 in July, the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) said in a statement. Meanwhile, the employed persons remained stable, rising 0.2 percent to 16.02 million persons from 15.98 million persons in July. The employment-to-population ratio, which indicates the ability of an economy to create employment, went up by 0.1 percentage points to 67.1 percent in August. By economic sector, the number of employed persons in the service sector remained on an increasing trend, particularly in food and beverages service, wholesale and retail trade, administrative and support service activities. A similar trend was observed in the manufacturing and construction sectors, while the number of employed persons in the agriculture and mining and quarrying sectors continued to decrease. During the month, the number of the labor force strengthened further with an increase of 0.2 percent to 16.63 million persons. Consequently, the labor force participation rate continued to increase by 0.1 percentage points to 69.7 percent. "In line with the improving economic condition, the labor market is expected to continue to flourish in the upcoming months, coupled with new entrants into the labor market as well as the entry of foreign labor into the country in the near future, which is expected to meet the increasing needs of the labor force in the market," said the DOSM.

From <https://english.news.cn> 10/11/2022

SINGAPORE: Labor Market Continues Improving in Q3

Singapore's Ministry of Manpower announced on Friday that the country's labor market continued improving in the third quarter of 2022, but there are some early indications of easing in the momentum of improvement amid slower economic growth. Preliminary data from the Labour Market Advance Release Third Quarter 2022 showed that Singapore's total employment, excluding Migrant Domestic Workers, expanded by 75,600 in the third quarter, continuing the strong growth observed in the previous quarter. Non-residents accounted for the majority of the total employment expansion, as non-resident employment continued its rebound towards its pre-COVID level. In September 2022, the total employment surpassed its pre-COVID level in December 2019 by 1.7 percent. Meanwhile, the country's unemployment rates edged up slightly in September 2022 to 2 percent overall, 2.9 percent for residents, and 3.1 percent for citizens, after trending down to a six-year low in August 2022. However, the rates remained within the pre-COVID range. Besides, the number of retrenchments increased to 1,600 in the third quarter of 2022,

from the previous quarter's all-time low of 830. The retrenchments were from the manufacturing sector, mainly due to discontinuation of product lines, as well as the services sector, mainly due to business reorganization or restructuring. The ministry said that a deteriorating global economic environment, higher global inflation, as well as geopolitical tensions, will impact Singapore's labor market in the coming months.

From <https://english.news.cn> 10/28/2022

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THAILAND: PM Orders Assistance for Flood-Hit Areas

Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha on Monday ordered relevant agencies and local authorities to step up efforts to support flood-affected areas. At a meeting on flood situation management and assistance, Prayut urged efforts to assist local residents and entrepreneurs who have been badly affected by the flood, acting government spokesperson Anucha Burapachaisri said. Prayut also ordered public agencies and the military to mobilize personnel and equipment to help evacuate affected people to safe areas, and provide food, drinking water and medicine to those in need, according to Anucha. The prime minister is scheduled to take a field trip to northeastern Thailand's Khon Kaen and Ubon Ratchathani provinces on Tuesday to inspect the flood situation, the spokesperson said. As of Monday, heavy rainfall has triggered flooding in 16 provinces in the country, according to the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation under the Ministry of Interior.

From <https://english.news.cn> 10/03/2022

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Thailand Looks to Tourism to Drive Economic Recovery

Thailand has pinned hope on the tourism sector to boost economic recovery amid growing concerns about a slowing global economy and its impact on the country's exports. According to the latest report by Kasikorn Research Center, a Thai think tank, Thailand's economic recovery will be driven primarily by tourism for the remainder of this year and through 2023. Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Governor Yuthasak Supasorn told a press briefing on Tuesday that a total of 10 million international arrivals are expected by the end of this year, which will generate a revenue of 1.5 trillion baht (about 39.3 billion U.S. dollars). Similar prediction has been made by Kasikorn Research Center, which expects 13-20 million foreign visitors to Thailand in 2023. However, the number of international arrivals is still far below the pre-pandemic levels. In 2019, Thailand welcomed nearly 40 million tourists. To better boost the tourism industry, the TAT has launched the "Always Warm" campaign in this upcoming winter as tourists are looking for a destination to escape the cold weather amid rising energy costs, according to Yuthasak. "The Always Warm campaign will not only touch on Thailand's warm weather but also the warm hospitality," he said, adding that it will launch promotions with airlines to attract foreign tourists. The TAT is optimistic about generating an estimated 2.4 trillion baht

(about 63 billion U.S. dollars) in tourism revenue next year, which is 80 percent of the amount in 2019. The tourism-reliant kingdom suffered a 6.2 percent GDP contraction in 2020, the largest yearly dip in over two decades, and expanded by 1.6 percent last year.

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Thailand's Poverty Reduction Slows Down

Thailand's poverty reduction has slowed since 2015, reflecting a weakening economy, stagnant incomes and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, a World Bank report said Friday. According to the report, Thailand made significant progress in poverty reduction with the number of the poor dropping to 6.8 percent in 2020 from 58 percent in 1990, thanks to the country's high growth rates and structural changes. However, 79 percent of Thai poor people lived in rural, agricultural households, with the rural poor outnumbering the urban poor by nearly 2.3 million. The report showed that rural Thais faced more than 3 percentage points higher poverty rates than those who lived in urban areas. It also found that the poverty rates were unevenly distributed across the country, with the South and Northeast having rates that were almost twice as high as the average. Thailand has the greatest income inequality rate in East Asia and the Pacific, with an income Gini index of 43.3 percent in 2019, the research found. Rural households earned 68 percent of urban households' monthly income. "Policy measures that increase agricultural productivity, support diversification to higher value crops, and improve access to markets through better connectivity and digital technology can help overcome the constraints faced by the rural poor," said Fabrizio Zarcone, World Bank's country manager for Thailand.

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VIETNAM: HCM City to Accelerate Housing Development

HCM City continues to accelerate the implementation of related procedures for the city's housing development programme by 2030, including social housing, affordable accommodations for workers, and relocating houses in slums along canals and rivers. This was announced at a press conference held on September 29 by the municipal People's Committee to provide a review of socio-economic development in the first nine months of the year, the outlook for the entire year, and COVID-19 pandemic prevention and control work. Phạm Đức Hải, deputy head of Propaganda Department of the city Party Committee, chaired the press conference and said the city's economy saw a strong continued recovery in the first nine months of the year. The city's gross domestic product in the first nine months of the year grew by 9.7 per cent compared to the same period last year. The total state budget revenue was estimated at nearly VNĐ350 trillion (US\$14.6 billion), up 27.7 per cent year-on-year, reaching 90.5 per cent of the whole year's plan. In the first nine months of the year,

total import-export revenue was VNĐ104.7 trillion (\$4.4 billion), up 19.7 per cent year-on-year, reaching 89.9 per cent of the year's estimate.

The city welcomed 20.6 million domestic tourists, a 66.1 per cent year-on year increase, and 2.1 million international tourists, up 10 per cent year-on year. In the last months of the year, the city strives to safely, flexibly and effectively control and adapt to the pandemic, improve the quality of infrastructure, urban development and management, and accompany businesses to build a favourable investment environment. It will promote the market stabilisation programme and solutions in price management in order to stabilise price levels. It will prepare enough supply of goods to meet the needs of consumers at year-end and the Lunar New Year festival, and also hold its annual sales promotion month from now until the end of the year. Promoting tourism development, cooperation and linkages in tourism with localities and tourism promotion activities abroad will be strengthened in the last months of the year. The city will implement a strategy to ensure a suitable labour supply for socio-economic development, and improve the quality of human resources.

It will boost urban development, urban embellishment, and re-construction of old apartment buildings, reduce urban flooding and environmental pollution, and gradually expand public green outdoor spaces to meet the needs of residents. It is mobilising all resources to complete metro line No.1, and preparing the investment of metro line No.2, Ring Road No. 4 and HCM City-Mộc Bài Expressway projects. The city continues to review and complete procedures for the implementation of the housing development programme by 2030. It expects to build about 35,000 social housing units by 2025, including about 7,000 lease houses and 4,500 accommodations for workers. In the following five years from 2026 to 2030, the city will build 58,000 social housing units, including 11,600 lease houses and 8,000 accommodations for workers. The city is working to set up a working group to carry out a renovation project in Xuyên Tâm Canal and the relocation of thousands of houses. Xuyên Tâm Canal is about 8.2km long, of which the project's scope from Nhiêu Lộc - Thị Nghè Canal to Vàm Thuật River is 6.4km long.

The project, estimated to cost about VNĐ9.4 trillion (\$392 million), has been delayed for many years and is also one of 25 urgent projects on the city's list of urban betterment and development plans in the 2021-25 period. It aims to relocate 6,500 houses on and along the canal while tackling drainage-related problems and improving the environment. The pre-feasibility study report of the project must be completed and submitted in October. After that, the municipal People's Council will make further decisions regarding investment policy in the last meeting of this year. Lê Thiện Quỳnh Như, deputy chief of the city's Department of Health Office, said the department has implemented many solutions to strengthen and increase medical human resources of the grassroots health network. It plans to attract students graduating from colleges and universities of medicine and pharmacy to work at commune and ward medical stations across the city.

More Data Needed on People with Disabilities in Việt Nam

There is a serious shortage of data on specific groups of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) in Việt Nam, especially those who are most marginalised, including persons with hearing and learning difficulties. As Việt Nam is set to conduct its second national survey on people with disabilities, it is important to collect data on the full spectrum of people with disabilities in Việt Nam, so as to develop appropriate actions and policies. Representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Việt Nam, Việt Nam Federation on Disability and the General Statistics Office (GSO) held a consultation workshop regarding the issue on Thursday. Speaking at the workshop, Patrick Haverman, Deputy Resident Representative of UNDP in Việt Nam, said that according to the latest UN analysis, out of the 158 sustainable development indicators of Việt Nam (VSDGs), only eight require data regarding those with disabilities. Among these eight indicators, only two (the number of beneficiaries of monthly social allowance in the community, and number of people living and being cared for in social protection facilities or social housing) are collected by both the General Statistics Office and the National Council on Disability (NCD) through statistical surveys and reporting.

Data of half of the eight indicators to assess the level of disability inclusion in different areas of VSDG are not collected by NCD, such as the proportion of the population satisfied with their most recent experience of public services. "It is difficult to find disability data; and when found, it is unclear which source should be cited due to the inconsistency of data reported by different Government agencies," he said. "It is important to make PwDs more visible in our national database and to have more indicators disaggregated by disabilities in VSDGs, which helps us better understand PwDs' vulnerability and needs," he said. "UNDP is supporting the development of a set of output indicators for the National Survey on Persons with Disabilities in 2023 to be comprehensive and align with international standards," Haverman said. Đặng Văn Thanh, vice president of Việt Nam Federation on Disability, said there were about 6.2 million people with disabilities in Việt Nam including more than 700,000 children. He said that the number of people with disabilities in Việt Nam released by different agencies was different from each other. This crucial information was a foundation to design and develop activities and policies, for example, social welfare, education or healthcare, he said. "The more exact the input information is, the better the outputs are," he said.

Deputy head of the GSO Lê Trung Hiếu said that Việt Nam was preparing for the second national survey on people with disabilities next year. The first National Survey on PwDs was done in 2016, using an internationally standardised toolkit for measuring disability. That survey was part of the National Statistical Survey

Programme. "Through that survey, for the first time, we had an overview of the disability rate in the general population nationwide, types and degrees of disability, as well as PWDs' living conditions and the level of PWDs' integration in a number of areas such as healthcare, social protection, education, employment, and a comparison of disability rates between socio-economic regions," said Hiếu. Until now, there have been many reports by State agencies, organisations and for persons with disabilities, and disability experts still using data published in this survey. After six years, the 2016 National Survey on Persons with Disabilities (VDS 2016) no longer accurately reflects the current situation of PWDs in Việt Nam, Hiếu said. "The data needs to be updated and supplemented to better support the monitoring of disability-inclusive socio-economic development programmes and policies, and to better meet the law and policy-making requirements in line with international commitments, particularly the upcoming amendment of the Law on Persons with Disabilities, the monitoring of the implementation of disability-mainstreaming laws, policies, and the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)," he said.

The GSO has proposed a set of 53 indicators to be disaggregated by disabilities, covering ten Sustainable Development Goals. The indicators can be used not only for the survey next year, but also serve the disability data disaggregation in other national statistical surveys, contributing evidence to the development of disability-inclusive socio-economic policies and programmes. Nguyễn Đình Trung, a GSO official, said that in Việt Nam, according to the national population census 2009, people with disabilities made up 7.98 per cent of the country's population aged from five. According to VDS 2016, people with disabilities made up 7.06 per cent of the country's population aged from two years old. It is estimated that now, there are about seven million people with disabilities in Việt Nam. "Data about people with disabilities in Việt Nam still fails to meet increasing demands of data users, especially in policy making, monitoring and assessing the implementation of relevant laws as well as the implementations of international commitments that Việt Nam has made," Trung said, He said that GSO was developing plans to conduct the second national survey on people with disabilities in September and October next year, collecting responses of 75,000 households nationwide. In addition, questionnaires would also be offered to social sponsor centres which take care and offer services for people with disabilities. The survey will also collect information from commune/ward people's committees, ministries, agencies, schools and grassroot healthcare centres. Vũ Thị Kim Hoa, deputy director general of Child Affair Department under the Ministry of Labour, Invalid and Social Affairs, suggested that it was necessary to collect information about children with disabilities, which would help to better ensure child rights and address child-related issues.

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Rural Tourism Development to Be Improved to Meet Potential

Experts consider rural areas a 'gold mine' for the tourism industry to diversify products, and there is a lot of work to be done. Statistics from the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) show that the number of tourists participating in rural and ecological forms of tourism accounts for about 10 per cent, with revenue of approximately US\$30 billion per year. On average, each year, the proportion of rural tourists increases by 10-30 per cent. In Việt Nam, rural destinations had received considerable attention, especially after the tourism industry opened its doors to international visitors after the pandemic, said the chairman of the Vietnam Tourism Association Vũ Thế Bình. With nearly 65.6 per cent of the population living in rural areas with beautiful landscapes and preserving many cultural and historical values, Việt Nam has potential and strengths in rural tourism development in three forms: community tourism, agro-tourism and ecotourism, according to the chairman. Chairman of the Tourism Advisory Council Trần Trọng Kiên said that the rural tourism model had not only brought livelihoods to farmers but also contributed to preserving and promoting traditional cultural values and ecological landscape, all while supporting the diverse and sustainable development of tourism destinations. According to information from the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, the country currently has 365 rural tourist destinations in 37 provinces and cities and more than 2,000 traditional craft villages with potential for further development. In many localities, rural tourism is spearheading economic development.

The administration said Hà Nội alone has 806 craft villages that run as rural tourism models, including Ba Vì, Quốc Oai, Gia Lâm, Sơn Tây, Mỹ Đức and Thường Tín districts. For example, Đồng Quê farm in Ba Vì District is a destination for tourists and students of international for extracurricular activities, in which they can experience an old Vietnamese village space and try growing vegetables and harvesting agricultural products. In Thường Tín, Nguyễn Văn Tú, the director of Hồng Vân Flower, Ornamental and Service Cooperative, said visitors could experience agricultural tourism in the commune by collecting seasonal agricultural products, visiting the production, processing and packaging area of herbal teas. Despite the potential, rural tourism still has many shortcomings, according to experts. Chairman of the Vietnam Community Tourism Association, Phạm Hải Quỳnh, said that the drawback of rural tourism was the lack of synchronous infrastructure and quality accommodation facilities to keep guests staying longer. He added: "Rural tourism has developed fragmented and spontaneously, mainly small business households, due to the lack of planning, mechanisms and policies to support the development of this field."

"The subjects of rural tourism development are local households, so the investment potential is limited and could not create an overall tourism picture. However, rural people desperately need support to complete infrastructure and improve the environment," he said. Chairman of Hà Nội Travel Association, Phùng Quang Thắng, said that rural tourism products were still poor while the labour force, who were

mostly local people, had weak knowledge and skills to perform tourism services. Deputy Director of Hà Nội Department of Tourism Trần Trung Hiếu added that the number and scale of agricultural tourism enterprises were limited, and the system of supporting infrastructure for agricultural tourism was not synchronous, making it difficult for tourists to access this type of tourism. Tourism experts said the locality needed to plan and invest in rural tourism to overcome these inadequacies. Inviting experts to build attractive and unique tourism products that achieve high efficiency was necessary. Chairman of the Việt Nam Tourism Association Vũ Thế Bình pointed out that developing rural tourism required localities to have specific regulations and appropriate policies on the conversion of agricultural land use for tourism development. Currently, Hà Nội city focuses on piloting six models of agricultural and rural tourism development; community-based tourism; smart tourism village; craft village tourism in the direction of green, responsible and sustainable tourism in the districts of Thường Tín, Đan Phượng, Thanh Trì, Mỹ Đức, Thạch Thất and Sơn Tây town.

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City Health Department Sees Writing on the Ward, Proposes Higher Pay for Nurses

With more and more nurses in HCM City public medical facilities quitting their jobs, the local health authorities are asking for VNĐ500 billion (US\$20.7 million) to increase salaries for healthcare workers. According to the director of the city Department of Health, Tăng Chí Thượng, medical workers at public hospitals send in resignation letters every day. The most pressing issue the public healthcare sector faces is the lack of nursing personnel, who frequently cite low pay and overwork as reasons for quitting. Most nurses who quit say they could no longer work in a stressful environment, get exposed to infectious diseases on a regular basis and work frequent night shifts for a salary of just VNĐ7-9 million (US\$295-380) a month. In 2021 and in the first six months of 2022, more than 2,000 medical workers, mainly doctors and nurses, quit. The ideal ratio is three nurses to one doctor, but currently there are only 1.5 to two nurses. This would lead to a decrease in the quality of patient care, Thượng said. Health authorities have proposed several short-term solutions, including raising nurses' salaries and bringing back retired employees. Thượng also proposed subsidising tuition fees for people studying to become nurses to encourage more people to adopt the career.

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South Asia

INDIA: A New Digital Lifestyle Is Taking Shape

There is a new 'digital lifestyle' taking shape in India, said Union Minister for Education and Skill Development, Dharmendra Pradhan today. India's digitization is creating new opportunities with the indigenous 5G by the end of 2023 to world leadership in digital payments, upcoming digital universities, and networking all villages with high-speed internet, said education minister while addressing the inaugural session of the International Conclave on 'Digital Transformation and Internationalization of Higher Education organized by the Deakin University, Australia. "Our partnership in the education and skill sectors is going from strength to strength. India aspires to lead the Industrial Revolution 4.0 and the India-Australia partnership can play a major role in this journey." India and Australia share a long relationship based on shared values, Pradhan further added. He said that knowledge is a critical pillar of any civilization. Indian civilization is always knowledge-based and knowledge-driven. Taking this forward, India is implementing the National Education Policy 2020. "The Challenge today is educating and skilling the vast population in the 15-25 age group." The minister also called for new knowledge networks with international institutions setting up campuses in India and Indian institutions going global. "India has always enriched society with wisdom. In the ever-evolving world, Indian knowledge networks will be for the benefit of humanity", he added.

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Elderly Helpline Working Effectively in Punjab, Ensuring Fast Complaints Redressal Mechanism

Punjab Social Security Minister Dr. Baljit Kaur said on Wednesday that Punjab government led by Chief Minister Bhagwat Mann is committed to working for the elderly. She further added that the grievances of the elderly are being addressed at a faster pace through the toll-free helpline number 14567 of the department of social security, women and child development, without creating an unnecessary delay. Divulging details, Minister for the Social Security, Women and Child Development said that the Punjab government is committed to provide quick services and facilities to the elderly of the state by serving them with compassion through the helpline. She further said that this helpline serves as a platform for redressal of complaints of senior citizens of Punjab, due to which positive impact is being seen in the lives of senior citizens. Dr. Baljit Kaur added that the elderly have to face many difficulties in life for any help. They can contact at the toll-free number 14567 regarding their problems. She further informed that so far 61413 calls (serviceable and non-serviceable) have been received from different districts on this toll-free number, out of which 17235 calls (serviceable) have been processed. Apart from this, 27893 non-actionable calls have been received on this number and cases are being pursued on 16285 calls. Out of 9413 serviceable calls, pension-related 4587, legal 988, abuse 535, Covid support 548 calls, other 389, health-related 294, emotional support 210, OAH related 165, carers 52, rescue 42, Activity Center 10, Volunteering 02 have been received. Cabinet Minister Dr. Baljit Kaur has appealed to the elderly to

make maximum use of this helpline number 14567 so that the elderly can lead a healthy lifestyle without any problems.

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5G Rollout Will Benefit Education Sector Massively

Education would be one of the sectors benefiting in a big way from the rollout of 5G technology in the country, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said on Saturday. Education will be one of the major beneficiary sectors of this 5G rollout," said Pradhan. The launch of 5G telecom services would help in the implementation of 'digital university' being envisioned by the Ministry of Education, he said."Because, now, we are envisioning a digital university. We are going for virtual labs. We are going for virtual teachers. In all the areas, if we develop quality content and presentable content, how do we send them to the nook and corner of the country? 5G will be the major vehicle to reach out to the unreachable," Pradhan further mentioned. Digital economy, healthcare, education and other sectors would see the benefit of 5G. With the launch of 5G services, India is joining the "premier league" and the common man would immensely benefit from it, Pradhan said. "The new 5G network is going to create a sea-change in the entire scenario. I see the poor man will be the major beneficiary of this 5G rollout," he said. India is soon going to become a technological superpower in addition to becoming an economic superpower, he said referring to the grand 5G launch. Observing that the country is aspiring to become an economic superpower and a knowledge-based economy, he said innovation and entrepreneurship would take the nation forward.

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Cloud Computing – Unlocking Vivid Career Roles

With the increased use of technology, the huge amount of data is generated that needs to be kept safe and that too with a cost-effective method. Here, comes cloud computing into the picture. Cloud computing offers opportunities for innovation and benefits in the classroom that are both safe and cost-effective. The advent of technologies like cloud computing, Artificial intelligence, and Machine Learning has increased the chances of innovation in the education landscape. Today, mere teaching and learning with the traditional methods are not sufficient, students need to critically think, evolve and innovate in the classroom to upskill themselves with 21st-century skill sets. Sheeba Chauhan of Elets News Network had an exclusive conversation with Bhavesh Goswami, CEO, & Founder, CloudThat to discuss the possibilities that cloud computing offers to the education space. Edited excerpts: You have more than 17 years of experience working in the cloud computing space. What are the major challenges and opportunities you faced throughout your journey? I moved back to India from the US in 2011 after working on the initial development

team of Amazon Simple Storage Service (S3) in Seattle to launch their first service of AWS and worked for Microsoft on some of their initial cloud products. Then, India hardly had any cloud momentum. AWS had no office in India, Singapore housed the nearest AWS office, and Microsoft Azure was not available in its current form. Also, Indian IT giants like TCS, Wipro, and Infosys had no cloud division. The initial challenge for us was to train the workforce of these organisations in the cloud. We were the first cloud training organisation in India to accept this challenge and have helped 5 lakh professionals to get trained in the cloud computing domain.

In the present context, the cloud space has matured, and the services have expanded exponentially. AWS has over 200 services and releases over 2000 major features each year. The biggest challenge is to help organisations to gear up to meet the rapid changes witnessed in cloud space. Most organisations are finding it tough to ramp up to the rapid changes. We at CloudThat are on a mission to build a robust cloud ecosystem in India with our cloud training and consulting expertise. How do you rate India's readiness for the adoption of technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI) & Machine Learning (ML) in the education department? While the Ed-tech industry has embraced AI/ML innovations with open hands with Edtech leading the deck in AI adoption, the general education ecosystem is far behind. CloudThat itself with the partnership of Microsoft conducted a unique program called "Week of AI" where we educated over 2 lakh aspirants in AI in just a quarter. But still, we lack. This is evident from the recent NasscomZinnov report. India is projected to face a shortage of 14-19 lakh tech professionals by 2026 and primarily the dearth of skills is witnessed in niche areas like Artificial Intelligence Big Data Analytics and Cloud Computing. Reskilling the workforce and upskilling the fresh aspirants is the key to addressing this AI skilling challenge. Research says, if we can succeed in this mission, by 2035, Artificial Intelligence has the potential to add the US \$1 trillion to the Indian economy. Moreover, fostering a robust AI ecosystem relies on how universities, research-based companies, start-ups, and policymakers gear up to adopt these technologies. What are the job opportunities that can be attained by upskilling oneself in the cloud computing space?

To nurture a career in the cloud computing space you are primarily expected to have sound knowledge of programming languages, database administration & programming, Artificial Intelligence & Machine Learning foundation, and a comprehensive understanding of various cloud technologies and providers. Once you gain competency in these skills vivid career roles open that include Cloud Architect, Cloud Engineer, Cloud Software Engineer, Cloud Consultant, Cloud Security Analyst, Cloud Network Engineer, and Cloud Administrator. Interestingly, the IT giants in India like TCS, Infosys, Wipro, and others have realised the need to have a different pay band for cloud professionals. For instance, According to TCS chief human resources officer, Milind Lakkad, they are hiring 77,000 freshers in the FY-2022, and in that they are offering a higher pay scale for candidates with proficiency in Digital Skills like Cloud. Further, as a fresher, you can earn anywhere

between 4 lakhs to 10 lakhs rupees and for experienced professionals, the sky is the limit. What are the key considerations a user should make before choosing a cloud computing platform? Any organisation must ensure the following factors are considered before deciding to choose a cloud platform. Types of Cloud – You must weigh the pros and cons of choosing a public cloud, private cloud, or hybrid cloud for your business needs. Also, it is recommended to take up a multi-cloud approach to avoid the pitfalls of vendor lock-in. Pricing – It is important to pay attention to the pricing of each of these cloud models and smartly take a decision that suits your budget. Disaster Recovery & Governance Policies – Get clarity regarding the Disaster Recovery policies offered and how your vendor implements governance policies. Service Level Agreements – Read the Service Level Agreement documents thoroughly. Data Governance & Information Security Policies – Understand the data governance & security policies put forth by the vendors and seek clarifications if needed. With the advancement in industry and changing needs of the education sector, how is CloudThat innovating in its product portfolio?

Every day, principals face new challenges in their efforts to create a strong student education ecosystem. One of the most difficult tasks I've had in my journey has been planning and streamlining a more comprehensive and all-encompassing curriculum. To address this, I have formed alliances with academicians & industry experts and developed customised outcome-based education that will map competencies and standards to improve learning outcomes. Today, this is commonly referred to as VESASC Autonomous courses, which have gained strong popularity among students. In the evolving landscape of education, like recent amendments in NEP, introduction of CUET for admissions, and a lot more. How are you planning to adapt to these changes? What are your plans for expansion of your institutions? The Cloud industry is growing exponentially, and the dearth of skilled professionals is evident in every sector. We have realised that there is a huge gap between the skills imparted in academia and what is expected by the industry and have initiated a unique career transformation and job guarantee program that is offered to final-year graduate students so that by the time they graduate they will have a career path defined with a job offer in hand or otherwise we will refund their fees. For the corporate sector, we have our unique Capability Development Framework (CDF) which can assess the cloud skill gaps of their workforce and thus help them strategise and roll out upskilling programs to be cloud-ready. To date, we have trained more than 5 Lakh professionals on cloud and other niche technologies like AI & ML, Analytics, DevOps, and Kubernetes. Today with cloud computing booming already 85 per cent of organisations have moved their IT resources to the cloud with a 'cloud-first' approach. The demand for cloud certifications in AWS, Azure, and Google clouds is skyrocketing, and multi-cloud and virtualisation are seen as the future of the cloud arena. In this context, CloudThat has strategically entered authorised training partnerships with Azure, AWS, and VMware.

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Education Abroad- Challenges and Opportunities

In the first quarter of 2022, 133,135 students left India for academic pursuits, an increase from 2020 when 259,655 students studied abroad. Students opt for undergraduate and higher education courses abroad, to shape their career and have global exposure. Though, pandemic has served a pinnacle of opportunities for the candidates through online mode, who wants to have international degree. Whilst students who were there physically have to suffer when pandemic hit the world. Global exposure is as important as studying in India. Based on a recent survey about the education abroad Sheeba Chauhan of Elets News Network interacted with Abhinav Mital, Founder, The WorldGrad and explored the myriad opportunity that the world offers in the education segment. Edited excerpts: The proportion of UG students considering a hybrid learning option is highest among those considering Australia and the United Kingdom (86 per cent). Why hybrid courses have become popular amongst students? The most common difficulties students face when considering studying abroad are fees, transitioning to a new educational system, and cultural differences that come with moving to a new country.

By completing a portion of an abroad degree from home, a student often saves 20-25 per cent on overall costs, becomes more familiar with the academic environment, and is able to demonstrate their dedication to studies without a doubt. Students with hybrid education have better time management skills. Hybrid learning allows for greater savings as well as instant learning. The ability to attend courses from faraway locations using internet-enabled devices has made life hassle-free for students. Employment opportunities are the most crucial part after graduation or post-graduation. How do you think studying abroad increases employment opportunities for fresh graduates? International programmes offer students a one-of-a-kind and diverse learning experience. They can get a good education, learn about a new culture, meet new people, and learn new skills and languages. A study abroad program can also help students advance their professional chances. Studying for an overseas degree is an achievement in and of itself. A degree from a prestigious foreign university can give the student's CV an edge when searching for jobs. One can also include any course placements, internships, or work experience. It provides students with a fresh viewpoint and opens up professional opportunities they had never considered or heard about before. Studying abroad exposes learners to various fields and industries and assists them in developing a global perspective. Furthermore, having studied overseas, students are better prepared to handle difficult professional duties in any field.

Employers frequently look for a candidate's confidence, adaptability, flexibility, and practical expertise. All of these qualities can be acquired when living and studying in another country. Students learn critical life skills and the capacity to deal with unforeseen circumstances while making their way through a new nation and its

culture. I feel studying for a degree abroad is a wise investment because it can help students find a better job and pave the way to a more fulfilling career and life. Australia is 32% of UG students; top destinations. What makes Australia the top destination? Australia is a secure and hospitable destination to live and study, constantly ranking among the world's safest countries. The best learning outcomes are those that are active, engaging, and relevant. Australian universities are known for providing high-quality education through industry-focused courses that place a greater emphasis on real-world learning than theoretical knowledge. The learning models are specifically developed to assist students in becoming industry-ready and realising their career goals. Full-time employment among graduates of higher education institutions in Australia climbed slightly to 68.7% last year. Also, the Australian government recently announced a major extension of post-study work rights for international students, giving the extra-nudge. Many Indian students choose to study in Australia because of the country's pleasant, laid-back atmosphere, great education system, and high standard of living.

With the coming of hybrid models, do you think online degrees abroad will be at par with offline degrees? Over time, the education industry has evolved. The sector's growth has been facilitated by the pandemic-induced digital world. Edtech businesses have risen to prominence since then, facilitating remote education. As previously stated, our recent study found that more than 80% of undergraduate (UG) students and 75 per cent of postgraduate (PG) students are eager to continue their international studies through a hybrid learning model. According to the response, finding career chances is still the most essential factor for students, followed by costs. This proves that while students choose part-online education, they also want to study offline and with their respective peers face-to-face. How is The WorldGrad helping students choose the best option abroad? Will hybrid models impact your business? Our objective is to improve student access to high-quality education, which means we need to broaden the possibilities for students who want to study abroad. It is not only about establishing more universities but also about offering different modalities or paths for students to study at those universities. We are the first to offer a hybrid route to overseas degrees, in which a student can complete up to one year of their degree through The WorldGrad and the rest at an overseas campus of their choice. Students can customize the length, courses, and scheduling of their studies with us, resulting in flexible and unique pathways based on their readiness to migrate overseas. We also provide students with direct connections to the same universities and institutions in other countries if they so desire.

Firstly, we assist students in selecting the best path for them, for which we rely on our highly qualified academic counselors. Once enrolled, the student will learn in our bespoke online environment with tailored academic help from teachers in India and overseas. This permits individuals to bridge scholastic gaps and become used to academic standards in other countries. Our principal objective is to equip children for academic success in a global setting. We see the hybrid approach as an addition to

the traditional offline curriculum model. We intend to increase students' opportunities to get academic experience. Having such a successful company makes students' dreams a reality. What are your expansion plans for this year and beyond? We at The WorldGrad aspire to provide students with online access to globally renowned foreign universities. So far, we've gotten an incredible response, which has inspired us to grow. By expanding in India, we will create more platforms. Australia's Online Education Services (OES) is a well-known online education enabler, and their recent investment in The WorldGrad has aided in the platform's expansion, allowing more students to study overseas at prestigious universities. With this initiative, we hope to establish 50 academic program partners in the next 12 months. Furthermore, we have successfully introduced the "UK 1 Year Program," which allows students to complete their 40-week first year of any undergraduate degree in just 26 weeks online. Additionally, one-on-one coaching ensures that students are prepared to finish their remaining coursework on campus. Over the next 18-24 months, we will add 500 professionals to our team, including instructors, administration, recruitment, content developers, and branding.

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A New Dawn for Learning – Digital Sphere Transforming Education Space

The Indian education sector has been an entirely offline affair traditionally. The advent of the internet and increased access to the digital sphere has transformed this system. E-learning and digitisation have opened up new and exciting pathways within the education space and allowed vastly more people to attain knowledge and qualifications. When coupled with the increased proliferation of home computers and internet-capable smart phones, and supported by affordable data nationwide, this change has gradually been taking place over the last decade. Learning online is also the edge that is making the change flourishing. This has not only changes the way knowledge can be garbbed but also openned a different set of career opportunities for entrepreneurs. To explore the opportunities such firms/ startups offer to the education paradigm, Sheeba Chauhan of Elets News Network interacted with Abhishek Gupta, Co-founder and CBO, Learnbay. Edited excerpts: Incepted in the year 2015, Learnbay witnessed more than 300 percent growth from revenue. How has been your journey throughout? Please shed some light on the hurdles in your path. Learnbay started its journey in 2015 with Python training and eventually added a system designing course. In the meantime, others were providing various courses with industrial and foreign certifications. It was pretty challenging concerning other competitors. Because more than quality teaching, students were attracted to courses offering industrial certification. AI and Data Science, as we all know, is the most trending technology of today and the future. So in 2017, we launched our first professional data science and AI training course with job assistance.

We never reduced the quality of our teaching because we promised specialised training with 1:1 assistance for students. Likewise, Learnbay never promises false notions with an eye catching feature or staff. One of the major problems we faced outside our organisation was the change in the data science job market. Very few data scientists hone domain knowledge. Our certified course with domain specialisation helps students to gain domain knowledge and land a lucrative job within six months of course completion. Today in 2022, we have more than 30 trainers and domain experts from various MAANG with more than five years of experience. We are building our workforce to more than 100 employers. In the era of personalization, we offer personalised data science and AI courses to professionals and our candidates. What are the live projects Learnbay provides to the students, and how is it impactful? Learnbay offers live projects from different domains. This enables students to work on live capstone projects of a specified domain. For example, we provide live capstone projects for domains like sales, marketing, HR, healthcare, BFSI, telecom, automotive, manufacturing, e-commerce, supply chain, oil, gas and energy, media, hospitality, and transportation. Students learn and enhance their skills by working on live projects and even finding a solution for real-world problems that organisations face daily. So students would know which are the latest trending tools or have been used by experts or professionals of top MAANG, MNC, and leading start-ups. So students who complete our courses with domain specialisation are recruited faster because of the live capstone project they have worked on.

What are the benefits of domain specialisation and hybrid courses for students? Domain specialisation is honing knowledge in a particular field or domain. It enriches students' knowledge in one specific domain. Students do not have to work again on a domain after course completion; on the other hand, organisations hire candidates with domain knowledge. Because organisations do not want to train candidates with domain knowledge, they want candidates with domain knowledge so they can start working from day one. The new age of learning is all about live online courses. Hybrid courses let students learn in both ways. Students can learn theoretical lessons from live online courses and complete their live capstone projects in hybrid classrooms because students can work on live projects collaboratively with other batch mates in hybrid classes (project innovation lab). Moreover, students can clear all their doubts on projects in hybrid courses and get a solution from our trainers. This will even help students to complete their projects along with the course. The platform offers practical training on various technical courses, including data science, AI, web development, and software development, tailored to its learner's individual needs. So why is Skilling and reskilling need of the hour? Currently, data science, AI, and software development are the technologies top organisations leverage for business growth and customer satisfaction. These are advancing technologies that yet have to gain their maximum potential. Organisations' traditional languages and tools have become outdated, and most professionals are experts in their fields. But after the technological advancement of data science and AI, almost all the leading

organisations and start-ups are product or service based; all are working along with data science and AI. So, organisations either lay off employees or have to build a new team with new-age skills and tools that the organisation is working on. This is where reskilling and up-skilling are crucial for any professional, it can even be a computer engineer or any other technical degree.

As I said earlier, it is a new era of learning, and every product or service is personalised today. Learnbay has also personalised the courses with domain electives and live projects. Currently, even organisations look for candidates with many personalised skills and domain knowledge. This is how Learnbay helps professionals who want to reskill or up-skill their ability to be updated with the current technology and its applications. What are the expansion plans for Learnbay, and any plans for the product portfolio? We have expanded every aspect, from adding new team members to courses, batches, offices, and hybrid classes (project innovation lab). Learnbay has grown from 30 members to over 100+ members. We have made a few changes to our courses and have added a full-stack software developer course with domain specialisation. We have reduced the number of members in a batch. So it becomes easy for trainers to concentrate on every student in the class. Learnbay recently added a Full-stack software developer course with domain specialisation and even opened up a hybrid class (project innovation labs). Students and professionals can complete live projects in these hybrid classes and with other batch mates for collaborative learning. These are the recent growth and products that have been added to our organisation.

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NEP Preparing the Next Generation to Thrive in the Digital Age

The goal of India's new educational system is outlined in the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), which was introduced in July, 2020. In order to ensure ongoing learning, NEP 2020 focuses on five pillars: affordability, accessibility, quality, equity, and accountability. Even in a post-covid world, online learning is anticipated to become the new standard, despite the fact that the future is unpredictable. This development came along at the proper moment since the New Education Policy gave e-learning, digital literacy, and new-age technology significant attention. Technology will be infused into every element of schooling due to the growing digitalisation. Education systems embrace technology in ways that boost teachers' roles as co-creators and designers of cutting-edge learning environments. Digital learning tools go beyond merely imparting knowledge; they also monitor our cognitive processes to identify the tasks and ways of thinking that we find interesting as well as those that we find tedious or challenging. Here is an exclusive conversation from the panel discussion that happened recently at the World Education Summit organised by Elets Technomedia. Edited excerpts: Prof. B.S. Murty, Prof. B.S. Murty, Director, Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad (IIT Hyderabad),

Hyderabad, Telangana said, “ Pandemic has forced us to venture into digital learning. It is all about learning beyond classrooms while before covid, it was all about learning in classrooms i.e Physical learning.” Due to covid more or less the whole world has moved towards digitisation direction, and in IIT Hyderabad, we are converting every classroom into digital. Our aim is to make our courses available for anybody in the world, Prof Murty further explained.

The whole national education policy in the context of which we are talking focuses on higher order learning outcomes, and more important is how do we expand learning opportunities, added Prof Raj. Navin Mittal, Commissioner, Collegiate and Technical Education Department, Government of Telangana said, “With the NEP 2020 and UGC’s new regulation of Dual degree and training programmes, has opened an entirely new spectrum for international education or education abroad.”Navin Mittal. Increasingly we have to position India as a destination for International students and some of our universities definitely fit into destinations of choice globally, he further added. M Nagarajan, Commissioner, Higher Education Department, Government of Gujarat elaborated that “Entrepreneurship, Research and Innovation, all three are interlinked. With good research, you reach an innovative idea which will make the base for your entrepreneurship journey.”M Nagarajan. A mind to market journey is a long procedure, from idea to the product and then to the market.

Thus, we encourage our students and fund their ideas. If we empower 10 percent of our students to become entrepreneurs they will be able to engage the other 90 per cent of the students, he concluded. Prof. Anil Kashyap, President and Chancellor NICMAR University, Pune, Maharashtra said, “NEP mainly talks about interdisciplinary aspects. It depends entirely on the curriculum, professional bodies, and the institutions which are the driving force of interdisciplinary actions”.Prof. Anil Kashyap. In Indian context, institutes and universities are already interdisciplinary, there are subjects which are cross functional. However, the importance of curriculum to be interdisciplinary is quite significant in the sense that cross learning is supporting various aspects, Prof Anil further added. Dr. Shashank Shah, Jt. Adviser/Senior Specialist (Higher Education), NITI Aayog, Government of India said, “NEP 2020 is very similar to the 1991 industrial Policy that transformed the entire fashion of work. NEP 2020 will open the same landscape for the education sector”.Dr. Shashank Shah. The skills that we need in the digital age are not just the digital skills but several other skills where digital tools and techniques will help us succeed in complex problem solving, negotiation, decision making and ethical orientation, Dr. Shah concluded.

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More Than 14,500 Schools Will Be Developed Under PM SHRI Scheme

Neeta Prasad, Joint Secretary (International Cooperation) Ministry of Education on Friday said, more than 14,500 schools will be built across India under the PM SHRI scheme with the components of NEP 2020. NEP 2020 encourages a holistic, flexible and multidisciplinary approach to education as envisioned by the Prime Minister. “It is based on foundational pillars of access, equality, quality, affordability and accountability. It is aligned with Sustainable Development Goals 2030 goals”, she said addressing the 6th East Asia Summit Education Minister’s Meeting. “There are various e-learning platforms like DIKSHA, SWAYAM MOOCS platform, Virtual Labs, e-PG Pathshala and National Digital Library”, Prasad added that online, open and multi-modal learning has been promoted under the PM- eVidya. She said that NEP 2020 focuses on the internationalization of education and building collaborations with other countries.

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India Offers the Unbeatable Combination of Talent, Scale and Skill to the World

Piyush Goyal, Union Minister for Commerce and Industry, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and Textiles said that India offers an unbeatable combination of talent, scale and skill to the world while interacting with the students at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Chennai. The campus of IIT Chennai was truly outstanding. It is a piece of art because science alone cannot define this place, Goyal said . Science is an enabler, art is in all of your minds which also helps come up with simple solutions for our day-to-day problems, he added. India has immense innovation potential and the world also wants to engage with sustainability and newer technologies at an affordable price and they would look towards India for it because of our innovation and talent pool. “Sustainability, energy efficiency, electric mobility coupled with India’s manufacturing skills, every innovation and technology developed here has a huge market”, he further added. India had offered a huge market of over a billion people who are now connected to the whole world through television and smartphones. Also, India offers the largest aspirational population, he further added. The Minister noted that the world today recognises that India’s time to shine has arrived. India’s demographic dividend, our large young population is another factor that is our strength, he said. Countries across the globe are today wooing us and is attracted to us for the talent pool and skillset India has to offer, he added.

The nation would be grateful for every contribution of our youth and our students. He observed that the scale of India’s aspirational population can help them get economies of scale, can power the technologies they are producing and can economise the output of their work, Goyal said while addressing the students. Goyal urged the students to have a bold vision and big ambition. “We as a country should have Big, Heavy, Audacious Goals. It abbreviates to BHAG. We all need to participate in the journey as we work our way towards becoming a developed nation

and run collectively towards this goal”, he added. The Minister said that innovation is elementary, simple thinking leading to solutions of a range of problems that can help our country and the world and students can all contribute immensely to these solutions. As we power our way into Azadi ka Amrit Kaal, these 25 years are going to define India and its future, he further added.

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Building Smart and Sustainable Mobility Solutions

“The depth of a democracy is best understood by the width of its footpaths.” Sudhendu J. Sinha, Adviser (Infrastructure Connectivity & Electric Mobility), NITI Aayog, Government of India, shared the above quote while delivering his special address at the Elets India Transformation Summit. He shared a broad framework about the future action plan that the government has envisioned with regards to mobility and urban planning. Highlighting how the cities of India cover 3 per cent of land but contribute about 98 per cent to the country’s GDP, Sudhendu J Sinha said, “We need to make our cities best in class and liveability. Our solution should be such that it must not become a problem in itself. It must be sustainable and digitally enabled.” He talked about replicating the European model of customised cities. “No city of India or Asia is in the top 100 cities when it comes to liveability index. The top positions are mostly acquired by the European or Western cities. Therefore, we need to learn from their core strengths, which are mobility and transport, ” he added. Sinha mentioned about the MOVE summit, held in Delhi in 2018, which was the biggest summit ever held on mobility in the world, where PM Narendra Modi gave the idea of 7C’s to be the paradigm of future mobility in India. PM Modi had said that mobility should be common, connected, convenient, charged, and must be of cutting edge technology. Accordingly, the National Mission on Transformative Mobility and Battery Storage, which was given the task of implementing the program, was launched within six months in March 2019.

“17 countries of the EU worked together to launch only 2300 electric buses whereas India alone launched around 5450 electric buses and now, we are aiming to take this number upto 50,000. We aim to completely transform the public transport in India from the traditional fossil fuel drive to the new and clean e-mobility. For this, the government has launched a production linked incentives (PLI) scheme for 2 components of e-mobility – Manufacturing and Advanced Chemistry Cell.” Sinha said while detailing the benefits of intended domestic manufacturing of lithium ion batteries by 2024-25, which will save huge costs. “To further boost electric mobility, we launched a 10,000 crore package program– FAME (Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles). We set a target of incentivising one million two-wheelers, but could only achieve a meagre fraction of 35,000. Same was the case with cars and buses. So, we restructured the target of each vehicle’s segment and found better outcomes,” he said, while adding that the faster pace of adoption of

electric vehicles in India has generated the interests of global investors in the Indian market. He further said that IITs are encouraged to undertake research work in mobility. A full fledged BTech course on mobility is being taught in Delhi. As many as 15 IITs have opened separate research centres in their campuses. Sinha quoted Gustavo Petro, Mayor of Bogotá, who said, "A developed country is not a place where the poor have cars. It's where the rich use public transportation", while detailing out the futuristic outlook of mobility in India. He opined that more emphasis will be placed on cycling and jogging tracks. Referring to the European model of cycling and jogging tracks, he said "we need to emulate their policies and awareness drive for our micro mobility." "We didn't create a policy, we created a program for mobility, hoping to get the states onboard smoothly. Government policies, sometimes, invite unwarranted criticism or protest from the states. Today, almost every state in India has created a policy on mobility and is attracting domestic as well as global investors," he said while mentioning about the proactive role being played by the government in it. He concluded with the belief that mobility would undergo transformational changes in the next 3-4 years and change the face of urban transportation and living in India.

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Shri Dharmendra Pradhan to Kickstart Public Consultation on National Credit Framework Tomorrow

Dharmendra Pradhan, Union Education & Skill Development Minister chaired a high-level meeting with the committee preparing National Credit Framework for School Education, Higher Education and Skilling here today. Anita Karwal, Secretary, School Education; Sanjay Murthy, Secretary, Higher Education; Shri Dr. Nirmaljeet Singh Kalsi, Chairman, NCVET; and senior officials of the Education and Skill Development Ministry attended the meeting. The Minister of education also nodded to start the process of public consultation on the National Credit Framework from tomorrow i.e. 19th October, 2022. The Government of India had approved the constitution of a High-Level Committee, vide order dated 18th November 2021, to develop a National Credit Accumulation & Transfer Framework for both Vocational and General Education. The Credit Framework would enable the integration of academic and vocational domains/components of learning and ensure flexibility and mobility between the two.

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Srinagar and Jammu Smart Cities to Get 200 Electric Buses

Jammu and Srinagar smart cities will soon have 200 electric buses running on their roads as the J&K administration has signed an MoU with Tata Motors and Chalo Mobility Limited as part of the government's initiative to establish an environmentally,

socially, and financially sustainable network of public transport. UT's chief secretary, Arun Kumar Mehta presided over a ceremony to sign an MoU with TATA Motors Ltd. and Chalo Mobility Pvt. Ltd for the deployment of 200 electric buses in twin capital cities of Jammu and Srinagar here. Speaking on the occasion on Monday, the chief secretary remarked that the induction of electric buses will transform the transport system in both cities of Jammu and Srinagar. He asked both firms to ensure the best travelling experience to people in the twin cities. He said that besides being environment friendly, the buses will also give a unique experience to the commuters. He maintained that the government is committed to provide every modern facility in the cities of the UT. He reiterated that the government would continue its efforts to provide world class comforts to people in both these smart cities. It was revealed during the function that passengers can also get details like real-time tracking of buses, how congested it is, along with expected time of arrival. It was also informed that the partnership between both firms will also eliminate the need for paper tickets and make contactless ticketing a greener option. Further, it was said that the initiative will play a significant role in savings on ticketing costs. Apart from reducing pollution levels, the electric buses are also equipped with state-of-the-art facilities like panic button, location system, CCTV, stop request system, and other security related features, as was given out on this occasion.

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Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari Launches 12 National Highway & 7 CRIF Projects in Hyderabad

Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari inaugurated 12 National Highway Projects of a total length of 460 km worth Rs 8000 crore and 7 Central Road Infrastructural Fund (CRIF) Projects in Hyderabad in the august presence of Union Minister for Tourism, Culture and Development of North East Regions G Kishan Reddy; Minister of State for Road Transport & Highways Gen V K Singh; Minister of Legislative Affairs and Housing of Telangana Vemula Prashanth Reddy; MPs; MLAs; MLCs and other dignitaries. The National Highway projects of a total length 460 km with an investment of Rs 8,000 crore will boost inter-state connectivity by enabling seamless travel from Telangana to Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh. The fast-paced highway development will boost trade and commerce in the region and create sustainable employment opportunities for the youth. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the network of state-of-the-art and safe National Highways built will have a transformational impact on the socio-economic prosperity of the people in Hyderabad and Telangana.

From <https://smartcity.eletsonline.com> 10/29/2022

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Digital Cities Issues and Challenges

Technology has always been a force multiplier. Moving beyond digital service delivery or grievance redressal, a fundamental rethinking of city governance and administration would help declutter many of the outdated objectives. The way we live and govern our cities and towns needs new paradigm so that it can stand up to the challenges of the third decade of the third millennium, such as, containing the periodic waves of pandemics, restarting the inclusive economic growth, ensuring credible climate and environmental actions and attaining the SDGs, writes Sameer Unhale, State Joint Commissioner, Municipal Administration, Government of Maharashtra. The institutions, processes, finances and behaviours of all the stakeholders of the Indian Urban System will require imagination, innovation, collaboration, inclusion, technology and participation. The future of a city, to a great extent, would depend upon its capacity to adapt and transform itself to become resilient and sustainable by making maximum utilisation of the potential of emerging digital technologies. The technology transformation strategy of organisations working in urban areas needs to include fundamental rethinking of proposals and means. We will also be required to mainstream concerns on climate, economic and social inclusion, accessibility and affordability of various civic services and other processes in city functioning. However, greater the challenges, greater the opportunity and potential. Cities, as a global trend, have become the most prolific geographical form of organising people, spaces and capital. The unilinear monocausal deduction of cause and effect may not be enough to comprehend the complex dialectical interplay of multiple factors, constantly affecting and changing each other and their collective outcome. Sometimes, one feels that the speed with which things are changing and other aspects like the butterfly effect, globalised impact, climate change, the uncertainties and social entanglements of disparate and unconnected phenomena calls for new ontology, for urban phenomenon, and so a new epistemology.

In view of digital transformation and emergence of data and its related dimensions in governance and citizen engagements, intellectual reformulation of these phenomena and significance of data becomes necessary. Current vocabulary of data, data capture, and data harvesting used in corporate circles reminds one of mercantile capitalism and the unfortunate human slave trade. Some analytical tools, popular with some intellectual traditions, may interpret these as Data Slavery, with data about a person as extreme form of alienation, which gets captured against the will of the person by inaccurate information and by manipulation. Ideas like data harvesting and data metamorphosis, news of data capture of infants, children, and non-adults, without their parents and guardians being aware of it, seem unethical. Talks of Digital Dictatorship or Surveillance capitalism do tend to create doubts in the minds of common people, about the motives for the use of ICT and data technologies. Various ideological commitments, political affiliations and personality cults, prejudices of researchers and academicians, or the profit motive or funding potential of big industry and philanthropies, knowledge gets coloured. The ability to allow unadulterated knowledge by, if one may use such a word, would need greater drawing of ideas from philosophy.

Currently, no philosophical systems seem to reveal the essence and relevance of the information age and its significance into ethics, ontology, epistemology, power structure, notion of money, wealth or capital making sense through popular culture to common people. The state of very high alienation at the individual level and anomie at the societal level, due to the information age, needs to be brought into some resemblance of ethical order, meaning and comprehension. Balancing the person's existential rights, his or her essence of being, needs some dignity and respect. We do see many efforts to reconcile privacy, individual rights and emerging technology in various parts of the world. Popular perceptions about technology need to be clarified. This calls for a variety of approaches, paradigms and processes in academic research to give deep insight into this complex phenomenon of cities. The dominant approaches in studying society, mostly were made by intellectuals rooted in the 1800s and 1900s. Trying to use the ideas, meant for different eras, to something that was difficult even to comprehend in those times, as a template to organise current ideas and study them, would be partial, inadequate, and may be one-sided. Thus, we need to think of newer paradigms to make sense of the current ICT-driven urban transformations. The works of the 1800s introduced us to the idea of annihilation of space and in the context of the built environment. But, ICT is introducing us to the annihilation of time! One would need a focused scholarship on urban phenomenon, not something that comes incidentally from other mainstream approaches.

The academic conceptualisation of these rapidly changing technological changes and its impact on cities, internal operations, service delivery, the economy, culture, citizens response to them, the impact of this on the form, inequality would be interesting and hopefully more academic interest reflects in more work. The intersection of science and technology and cities has always been interesting. In fact, we cannot have cities without technology. The earlier general purpose technology, combustion engines – both external and internal, and electricity could substantially sum up the material part of cities. From the realm of ideas, may it be facades, architecture, design or planning, culture, urban living and prisms of emotional connect and responses to the city. Environmental context to cities – pollution, land, water and air quality, degradation of land and loss of biodiversity to residential, commercial, industrial or mobility infrastructure, continue to plague any deliberations on cities. Stage 1 – Computerisation In the Indian context, wide regional variations in adoption of computers, including that of population size and financial resources of various cities can be seen. Those states which had a lead in IT policies were natural to pick up e-Governance. The e-Governance era of the 1990s was mostly in purchasing of computers and software programs related with the property tax, water billing, salary bills, and work related with budgeting and accounting. Yet, the focus seemed more to make the clerical work easier. Bigger cities went on their own. Some state efforts were to deploy common programs to most of the smaller cities and towns. The systems had over 15 to 20 modules covering most of the departments

and citizen services. It did make sense so as to avoid multiple tenders. However, vendor management and ensuring the necessary upgradation of platforms and systems over years, that too in municipal bodies at different stages of organisational and data maturity, was challenging. The fullest potential of the modules was not probably utilised.

Stage 2 – Websites

At the turn of the century, in the dotcom era, websites of municipalities along with grievance redressal measures were popular. The limited availability of technical manpower, especially beyond data entry operators, with the municipalities or structures responsible with their upkeep, could be the reason for limited use of these websites, which could have been beyond symbolic. Also Read | Digitising taxation to streamline administration & improve compliance. It was also seen that the purpose of ICT efforts often led to the primacy of a clerical approach to bureaucracy and administration. The initial conceptualisation of such software was, however, clerk/accountant centric. The primacy of clerical approach in government organisations and the peculiarities of paper as medium of storing information led to underutilisation of the fullest potential. The concept of file, when working in government, is still fundamental and the most basic unit of government decision-making process. A 'file' was historically a long needle used to pierce papers into it, so as to keep related papers together. Later, it became a system for compiling and storing information on paper. File structure is such that it has a noting side which keeps the record of decision-making, for accountability and transparency, and a correspondence side where all letters and supporting papers related to the issue are kept together. e-governance has not fully resolved. But the clerks and clerical thinking, out of fear of the loss of their power, importance or benefits, went on to hold onto the file system dearly. Thus, we saw computerisation efforts of making a 'file tracking system', or an 'electronic file' format, mimicking the paper file in its digital avatar, the best example of clinging to clerical thinking.

Stage 3 – Current uses in Data and City

A significant milestone after the softwares, was accelerated use of mobile apps in city governments, especially in the Smart Cities. The difficulty of navigating a website through smartphones, at the municipal level, did prompt the making of multiple mobile apps. These multiple apps, in a single city, created a dis coherence. The need is for an integrated and holistic approach, considering all of the potentials of ICT for cities, to use the digital ecosystem. Integrated City Command Control Centre is a new quantum leap into using ICT for cities. Exponential growth of smartphones, increased use of social media, advances with 4G/5G network, cloud computing, phase of proliferation of mobile apps, and now the potential of IoT sensors in city operations, use of remote operated water valves, SCADA (Supervisory control and data acquisition) systems, utility of blockchain, remote operation gadgets, and robotics used for underground sewer cleaning system, seems promising. Reference to the use of data and its potential for city operation and living, mostly from the

framework of big data and machine learning-led artificial intelligence, predictive governance is a future trajectory. The digital twins of cities, though creating infinite space in the virtual world, may also impact on the real .

Though the discussion of surveillance capitalism or digital dictatorships or ICT-enabled police states , in academic circles would be inevitable. The potential of predictive governance in welfare administration , if not in law and order or criminal administration, would have various academic interpretations. The latest digital technologies can work on greater functionality, without the need for such paper files. Cloud computing, shareware and blockchains can ensure the storage, authenticity and transparency of a decision-making process without the need for a paper file. Similarly, emerging digital services like GIS, hyperlocalisation, personalisation of governance services in “Governance as a Service” approach have tremendous potential. Similarly, convergence of multiple services for single profile/individual in family-based and individual beneficiary schemes, spread across all levels of governments, departments or ministries and their offices, missions and schemes available at a city region or city town is immense. To give real seamless experience to the citizens, the regulatory services in the way of licences and permits for individuals and businesses, and even corporate and private engagements of citizens can also be facilitated through the City e-Governance framework. So, the digital transformation in government functioning will require major rethinking at the most fundamental level.

Citizen Engagement

The ability of the urban systems to connect with citizens, businesses and street vendors, facilitating their engagement with cities; in service delivery and access to real time information, is important. “Total city as a ecosystem“ approach, or the entire city region, including all levels of government and their various agencies, corporate, private sectors, small business and NGO, seamlessly at the back end, could remove information asymmetry and also facilitate digital engagement to complete the transaction. The need for municipal employees and their training to use and conceptualise ICT in city life and in their day-to-day functioning is critical. Also, at the cultural level, the acceptance and adoption of ICT-enabled office functions by the entire staff. It may not be inaccurate to say that the middle and older generations could not imbibe it at the desired level. A simple thing like using a keyboard in the local language by officers and senior officers had limited utility. In fact, all the computers and laptops, at least in their initial stages, proved ornamental. Dependence on PA's or clerks to operate the systems had hilarious instances. But this proves the fact that ICT-enabled governance needs to be much more than purchasing computers, servers or software and developing applications.

Any thinking on ICT needs to include local political leadership and citizens and their readiness and ability to utilise ICT-enabled services. With greater access to smartphones and networks, the digital divide arising out of poverty, literacy,

temperament, gender, and age will have to be overcome. Or else, all the digital talk would only be technofad. Efforts will have to be made by cities, urban institutions and community-based organisations towards digital equality. Access, connectivity, if required as a basic infrastructure to citizens, would be necessary. The visually impaired, the illiterate, and the poor would have to be considered and suitably helped. But indications for wider utilisation of ICT should not be surprising. Driven by the ICT industry and techno-enthusiasts, with the legitimate promise of digital transformation, advertorial-driven media engagement need not take one to the techno-utopian idea of flying cars and robots. The concern of loss of human compassion or species due to excessive technology may be reflected. Yet the excessive dramatisation of Neo-luddite response to using technology in cities needs to be tempered. How and why remains to be seen.

The purpose of extensive use of digital technologies in government as well as city life needs to make citizens the epicentre of digital transformation. The size of the bureaucracy, entrenched hierarchy, significance of local political leadership and organisational culture, the paradigm of accelerated deployment of emerging digital technology, and more importantly, its acceptance and full utilisation, have its own challenges. This will have to be overcome collectively. Technology and its intersection with the city becomes essentially a cultural and behavioural phenomenon.

From <https://egov.eletsonline.com> 10/30/2022

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More Than 4000 Schools to Get New Infrastructure

Assam Chief Minister in an official statement says all government schools in the state will soon get new infrastructure. More than 4000 schools will be covered under this initiative as per the announcement made on Oct 20, 2022. Sarma tweeted, "We are trying to convert educational institutes of our State into centres for human resources development." Furthermore, Sarma, along with Education Minister Ranuj Pegu, the state government's education advisor, Nani Gopal Mahanta and senior officials, visited several old government schools in Guwahati and inspected the existing facilities. Among the other schools, he also visited Kamrup Academy, where he had studied. "Visited Kamrup Academy, Guwahati, and reviewed its infrastructure. Established in 1930, I had the privilege of seeking education from this historical institute in my childhood. The school building will be reconstructed and also get a new auditorium," Sarma said during his visit to his childhood school. Sonaram Higher Secondary School, Cotton Collegiate Government HS School, Tarini Choudhury Govt Girls' HS and MP School, and Gopal Boro Govt Higher Secondary School were the other schools that the CM visited. He reviewed the present scenario of the buildings and asked to draft a plan for constructing new ones.

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Central-West Asia

AZERBAIJAN: To Provide More Household with High-Speed Internet

A total of 420,000 households in Azerbaijan will be connected to the high-speed Internet network based on Gigabit Passive Optical Network (GPON) technology by the end of 2024, Deputy Minister of Digital Development and Transport of Azerbaijan Rovshan Rustamov said during a meeting on the use of radio frequencies, Trend reports. "A total of 370,000 households connected to high-speed internet base on GPON technology by the end of 2021. It's planned to provide 420,000 households with GPON technology internet by the end of 2024 and increase the minimum average Internet speed to 25 Mbps," he said. According to Rustamov, reliable, fast, affordable internet network is the way to build an innovative society and digital economy in Azerbaijan. GPON technology is provided over fiber optic lines. This technology has such advantages as the connection speed provided by this technology provides internet speed up to 100 Mbps, uninterrupted communication and no connection to telephone line.

From <https://en.trend.az> 10/07/2022

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Azerbaijani Electronic Security Service Working to Boost Human Resources on Cybersecurity

Azerbaijan's Electronic Security Service is working to increase human resources in the field of cybersecurity, Trend reports on October 13 via the service. According to the service, it regularly analyzes the overall cybersecurity situation in the country, monitors information resources and systems, investigates requests from citizens and private organizations, and provides them with appropriate support. "Besides, we inform about current cyber threats and train citizens, private and other organizations to combat cyber threats. An agreement was reached with the Azerbaijan Information and Communication Technologies Industry Association on joint cooperation in the field of cybersecurity," added the service.

From <https://en.trend.az> 10/13/2022

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TURKMENISTAN: Integrating TIR-EPD System with Automated Customs Data System

The State Customs Service of Turkmenistan has integrated the information system TIR-EPD developed by the International Road Transport Union (IRU) with the "transit" module of the customs information system ASYCUDA World, Trend reports citing Orient news. It is reported that the integration will speed up trade turnover and

increase the transport and transit potential of the country by obtaining preliminary electronic information about goods transported by foreign cargo carriers. This system will contribute to a more rapid and visual digital representation of the transported goods and will establish effective price monitoring. Meanwhile, the system is being implemented within the framework of the "Convention on International Transport of Goods Under Cover of TIR Carnets by the International Transport Union (IRU)". The TIR-EPD system is a system for providing customs authorities with electronic preliminary information about goods transported by road intended for import into the customs territory, including transit.

From <https://en.trend.az> 10/24/2022

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UZBEKISTAN: ADB to Help Promote Food Security, Social Protection, and Jobs

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$500 million loan to help promote food security, provide social protection for vulnerable groups, and support employment in Uzbekistan amid the economic impacts of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. ADB's Building Resilience with Active Countercyclical Expenditures (BRACE) Program will provide critical financing to the Government of Uzbekistan as it implements its \$1.2 billion countercyclical development expenditure program. The government's program focuses on strengthening food security and price stability, providing direct social assistance to low-income families, senior citizens and other vulnerable groups, and supporting the unemployed and returning migrant workers.

"Just as Central Asia was emerging from the pandemic, the region is faced with the economic impacts of the war—making life particularly tough for vulnerable people," said ADB Director General for Central and West Asia Yevgeniy Zhukov. "The BRACE Program is aligned with the Government of Uzbekistan's strategic priorities and will help to improve economic resilience while contributing to social protection and inclusion." The COVID-19 pandemic and the economic shock triggered by the Russian invasion of Ukraine are severely impacting Uzbekistan. These include higher trade costs, rising inflation, more unemployment and reduced remittances. This cuts the purchasing power of low-income households, weakens private consumption and results in rising poverty.

The BRACE Program will support government measures to ensure adequate supply of food at stable prices, such as wheat imports, and exemptions of essential food products from value-added tax and customs duties. It will also help the government maintain social assistance payments to more than 8.9 million vulnerable people until December 2022. ADB will also administer technical assistance for monitoring and evaluation support financed through a \$400,000 grant from the Technical Assistance Special Fund. "This program will contribute to the government's efforts to contain inflation within reasonable limits through fiscal interventions," said ADB Principal

Public Management Specialist Navendu Karan. “It will provide resources to boost local employment and entrepreneurship, and help to stabilize trade with other members of the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Program region and Europe.”

Double-landlocked Uzbekistan is a member of CAREC which promotes economic growth and sustainable development through cooperation among its 11 member countries. CAREC has helped to increase road and railway efficiency, streamline border-crossings, boost trade, and improve access to energy for millions of people across the region. Uzbekistan joined ADB, which acts as the Secretariat for the CAREC Program, in 1995. The bank has since committed loans, grants, and technical assistance of more than \$10 billion to the country.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 10/05/2022

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ADB to Support Integrated Urban Development in Uzbekistan Cities

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$59 million loan and \$500,000 grant to enhance livability and economic competitiveness in four secondary cities of Uzbekistan. ADB’s Integrated Urban Development Project will support strategic investments in municipal infrastructure and services in the cities of Djizzak, Havast, Khiva, and Yangiyer, which have experienced lagging growth due to the COVID-19 pandemic and vulnerability to climate change. “Integrated, climate-resilient urban development can boost the economic competitiveness of secondary cities while significantly improving the quality of life for people who live there,” said ADB Director General for Central and West Asia Yevgeniy Zhukov. “ADB’s project will apply innovative solutions and strengthen institutional capacity to help these cities build back better and faster.” The project will support the development of green, community-centered infrastructure including a new public park with a multifunctional community center in Havast and a public greenway and two-story visitor center in Khiva featuring Uzbekistan’s first digital museum with a Silk Road theme. It will also support the development of water distribution networks with climate-smart water saving technologies in Djizzak and improved solid waste management in all four cities.

“All residents and visitors will benefit from the development of these cities, especially the poor and vulnerable, from improved access to reliable and inclusive urban services,” said ADB Portfolio Management Unit Head for Central and West Asia Ron Slangen. “And by providing tourism skills training and support for small and medium-sized enterprises, this project will also help boost livelihoods.” ADB will also provide a capacity development program to improve sustainability, efficiency, and services delivery in the four cities. The bank will administer the \$500,000 grant provided as co-financing by the High-Level Technology Fund for the digital museum.

Uzbekistan joined ADB in 1995. The bank has since committed loans, grants, and technical assistance of more than \$10 billion to the country.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 10/18/2022

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Oceania

NEW ZEALAND: Digital Tools to Make Family Violence Support Widely Available

Associate Minister for Social Development and Employment Priyanca Radhakrishnan has officially launched a suite of new digital tools to support people affected by family violence. “Family violence is a scourge on our society and violent behaviour of any kind is absolutely unacceptable. We are taking the important steps to modernise access and better connect New Zealanders experiencing family violence to the services that can support them,” Priyanca Radhakrishnan said. “Bringing more support online will make taking those first steps to get support more accessible, and work towards our goal of eliminating family violence in Aotearoa,” Priyanca Radhakrishnan said. New digital tools launched today include a centralised 24/7 phone and online-chat support service, a dedicated website with interactive resources for those seeking help, and a new online space specifically driving behaviour change for those who may use violence.

“The pandemic highlighted a lack of alternatives to in-person support, including for those experiencing family violence. We committed \$4m through the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund to develop support tools that are relevant to the communities they serve,” Priyanca Radhakrishnan said. “This suite of digital tools will mean support is more accessible to those who need it, wherever they are, and whenever they need it,” Priyanca Radhakrishnan said. A 24/7 family violence support service accessible via phone and online chat will be delivered by Whakarongorau Aotearoa, in partnership with NCIWR and Shine. This service will directly support our refugees, helping to ease pressure on refuge staff. Traditional support services are now complemented by online help, offering built-in flexibility. A new ‘Are You OK’ website focuses completely on supporting family violence victims/survivors, building on the success of the It’s Not OK campaign.

The website features a new ‘Check it Out’ relationship assessment tool and a ‘Service Finder’ tool, helping users identify the most relevant support and where to access it. A separate website, In Your Hands, has also launched to drive behaviour change by those who may use violence and their support networks, so they can access information and support. “Any form of family violence is unacceptable, which makes the prevention of future violence and harm so important,” Priyanca Radhakrishnan said. “In order to eliminate family violence entirely, it’s important we educate and support individuals to understand violent and harmful behaviours, and

the serious damage they cause to families and whānau. “The development of all these tools has been done directly with the family violence sector to ensure we introduce tools that will best support our communities,” Priyanca Radhakrishnan said.

Minister for Prevention of Family and Sexual Violence, Marama Davidson welcomed the new digital initiatives as an important tool for communities to help people recognise and respond to family violence. “This suite of new digital tools is a significant step for Te Aorerekura – our National Strategy to Eliminate Family and Sexual Violence. “By making it easier for people impacted by violence to reach out for support, we’re on the right track to interrupt cycles of violence and support people and whānau to heal,” Marama Davidson said.

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 10/04/2022

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Strong Government Books Leave New Zealand Well Placed amid Global Challenges

The Government has delivered a set of books that are among the strongest in the world, ending the 2021/2022 fiscal year in a stronger position than forecast and ensuring New Zealand is well placed to respond to an increasingly volatile global economy. For the year to the end of June 2022, the Operating Balance before Gains and Losses (OBEGAL) recorded a deficit of \$9.7 billion, roughly half of what was forecast just months ago at Budget 2022. “We’ve delivered Government books that not only compare favourably with the comparable stage during the Global Financial Crisis, but across the key economic measures of growth, unemployment and Government debt we’re in a better or similar position to the likes of Australia, the US, UK and Canada,” Grant Robertson said.

“On the measures that matter the Government has steered the New Zealand economy and Government books through the 1-in-100 year economic shock of the pandemic favourably compared to the GFC – our economy has bounced back quicker, unemployment is lower, and the increase in debt compared to the size of the economy is comparable. “Our Wellbeing Approach has also seen significant reductions in child poverty through this economic shock. We are building more houses than ever on a yearly basis and we have invested heavily in skills and training, with apprenticeships more than 50 percent higher than when we took office. “The result confirms that our strong health response during the Delta and Omicron outbreaks has also led to one of the best economic responses in the world.

“In a volatile global environment it’s critical the fundamentals of the economy are strong, and they are. Our economic and fiscal position means we are well positioned to address ongoing challenges while continuing to make investments in the critical services New Zealanders need. “The Government’s strong finances allow us to focus

on investing in what matters most to New Zealanders: growing wages and cost of living support, hospitals, schools, housing, and addressing climate change. The best investment in our economy is investing in our people. “However, the global environment is challenging and will continue to put significant pressure on the Government books, so we will keep running a tight ship in order to achieve a return to the surpluses our Government posted pre-COVID.

“The end of the 2021/22 financial year marks the closing of the COVID Response and Recovery Fund and the end of emergency spending. As I have already indicated over the coming year with COVID cost pressures reduced we will look to cut our cloth and carefully target our spending as we have done over successive budgets to meet our priority investments. “Careful and balanced management will keep us on the pathway back to surplus. There is simply no room for unaffordable and untargeted tax cuts to those who need them the least. As we have seen, tax cuts with no plan for how to pay for them are economically reckless.

“We have every reason to be feeling positive. Our borders are open, COVID restrictions are largely gone, and we are in a position to lock in the gains of near-record low unemployment, rising incomes and a larger economy than before COVID. We’re set to accelerate our progress this summer as tourists and international students return, and working holidaymakers and skilled migrants fill workforce gaps. “Despite the challenges the world throws at us, New Zealanders can be optimistic about our future. Our economy is doing better than predicted and with restrictions lifted we can seize the opportunities created by the Government’s strong COVID and fiscal management,” Grant Robertson said.

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 10/05/2022

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Hundreds to Benefit from Additional Maternal Health Support

The Government’s Budget 2022 investment of \$10.1 million over four years in maternal mental health will result in better and more widely available care for new and expectant mothers around the country. The funding will be invested to fill gaps in care identified by last year’s maternal mental health stocktake and will result in more support in the regions. It’s estimated the packages will help support approximately 700 people per year once all funding is implemented by the end of the fourth year of investment. The funding will ensure that children, mothers and whānau can access specialist support services around New Zealand and access to appropriate māori services will be improved. “Supporting parents’ mental wellbeing during their child’s first thousand days is important for long-term emotional, mental, and physical wellbeing of the child.

Support for perinatal mental health is accessible for all pregnant or postnatal people when they need it most is also key,” says Associate Minister of Health Dr Ayesha

Verrall. “Last year’s maternal mental health stocktake demonstrated parents face a postcode lottery when accessing care. Through this funding and our wider health reforms, this Government has shown a commitment to ensuring we move towards a consistent level of access across Aotearoa New Zealand. The \$10.1 million will be available to add more clinical and non-clinical staff, as well as packages of care to provide more supports to whānau with higher needs including home-based supports. The final details of the full allocations are being worked on by Te Whatu Ora (Health New Zealand) and Te Aka Whai Ora (Māori Health Authority).

“This investment complements several other initiatives rolled out by this Government to support mothers in the post-natal period, including the Well Child Tamariki Ora enhanced support pilot, pregnancy, parenting services and recognition of maternal birth injuries by ACC. “These investments continue to build on funding from the 2019 Wellbeing Budget which invested in frontline mental health and addiction services and other early interventions. “We’ve put mental health help at local doctors and schools around the country, as well as universities, online, on the phone and through smart apps. This means more people are being seen and referred to the help they need.” “This Government is committed to ensuring parents receive the support they need during pregnancy, birth and in the post-natal period; making New Zealand the best place to be a child,” said Dr Ayesha Verrall.

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 10/06/2022

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Child Poverty Declines in Spite of COVID

The Annual Ministry of Social Development (MSD) Child Poverty Report shows child poverty continuing to decline despite the 1 in 100 year economic shock caused by COVID-19, Prime Minister and Minister for Child Poverty Reduction Jacinda Ardern says. “Despite COVID-19 causing the greatest global economic downturn since the Great Depression in New Zealand we have continued to lift children out of poverty over the past two years and avoided to date the spike in poverty we saw during the Global Financial Crisis a decade ago,” Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said. “In particular we have seen reductions in material hardship and increases in both before and after housing cost incomes for those on the lowest incomes, including a 40 percent increase in after housing income for those on a Main Benefit since 2018. “When COVID hit we purposefully put in place policies to avoid the spike in child poverty that occurred during the GFC, and today’s report shows those policies have been effective so far.

“Government initiatives like the Families Package, minimum wage increases, benefit increases, and Food in Schools have all contributed to reductions in poverty. “In addition the wage subsidy and investments in skills and training through COVID has delivered record low unemployment, meaning we have avoided to date the big increase of children living in jobless households that was seen in the GFC. “We have

learnt from the mistakes of previous Governments and delivered a response to COVID that has sought to avoid the economic scarring for the majority of children and families unlike in previous economic downturns. “While there is strong evidence in this report that things have been broadly improving for the worst off kids, I know there are still a core group of children in New Zealand that lead very hard lives and there is more work to do to fix that.

“I’m proud of what the Government has achieved to date, but remain committed to delivering ongoing reductions in child poverty in order to make New Zealand best place in the world to be a child for all kiwi kids,” Jacinda Ardern said. “We’ve remained steadfast in our commitment to reducing the number of children living in poverty and hardship, and today’s report shows that our Government’s suite of actions are making a real difference in children’s and families lives,” Minister for Social Development and Employment Carmel Sepuloni said. “Our Government’s once in a generation improvements in support for low and middle income families have reduced the number of children in poverty and our investments in support for businesses and workers like the Wage Subsidy and Flexi-Wage has resulted in Main Benefit uptake being lower compared to after the GFC.

“We are getting record people into work, with around 113,000 people moving off benefit and into work in the last year. “This shows the Government’s investment in employment and training along with our constant lifts in income support is continuing to deliver meaningful change. “We know people are still feeling the impacts of cost of living pressures, but through our welfare reforms and investments in education, employment and training, we have a plan to tackle the long-term issues facing New Zealand,” Carmel Sepuloni said.

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NZ in Strong Position to Face Global Economic Turbulence

New Zealand is in a strong position to handle the increasing global economic turbulence highlighted by the IMF’s latest forecasts released today. The IMF’s October forecasts show global growth slowing further to 2.7 percent in 2023 from 3.2 percent this year, for global inflation to peak near 9 percent this year and for growth in major economies the US, EU and China to stall. More than a third of the global economy is projected to contract this year or next. “New Zealand faces this period of global turmoil with an economy that is bigger than before COVID, near record-low unemployment and world-leading government books with low debt and a smaller deficit than expected. We’ve come out of the emergency COVID response in a stronger position than after the global financial crisis, and our reconnection strategy is bringing in tourists and new opportunities for our exporters,” Grant Robertson said.

“These strengths mean we can withstand the global downturn, while being able to

keep debt under control and target investments into what matters most to New Zealanders, like building hospitals, classrooms and addressing the housing shortage. “While we can be optimistic about New Zealand’s position and the opportunities for our economy, we also need to remain cautious about how we secure our economy against this global turmoil. Taking on more debt to fund tax cuts for the wealthiest New Zealanders would undermine this position, as we’ve seen recently in the UK. “The IMF recommended that for countries where the pandemic is receding, now is the time to rebuild fiscal buffers. It also recommended that fiscal policy to support people through the global cost of living spike should be temporary and targeted at the most vulnerable people.

“The report also highlights the importance of New Zealand’s shift towards energy independence through our climate change investments, with the October outlook warning that the energy crisis in Europe is not going to be a transitory shock,” Grant Robertson said. Grant Robertson will attend the IMF’s annual meetings this week in Washington. His schedule includes meetings with US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell and finance minister counterparts to discuss the global economic situation.

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 10/12/2022

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2.5 Million Hours Worked in Jobs for Nature

Community and iwi-led projects funded by the Department of Conservation’s Jobs For Nature programme have supercharged conservation efforts across the country, Minister of Conservation Poto Williams announced today. “Since the programme began in July 2020, more than 2000km of tracks have been maintained – more than the length of SH1. Seven thousand hectares of riparian planting protecting New Zealand’s waterways has been completed, which is equivalent to 7000 rugby fields, and 56,000 hectares of weeding has taken place. That’s an area larger than Wellington,” Poto Williams said. Across all 218 projects combined, people have worked 2.5 million hours. More than 1000 people have either completed or are currently undergoing further training in conservation, Poto Williams said.

“Jobs for Nature was created to provide nature-based employment in the face of COVID-19. Since then, 4000 people have benefitted from this programme through fulltime, part-time or casual work, keeping people in communities while the hardest-hit industries, such as tourism, recover. With around 1000 people choosing to undertake further training and upskilling in conservation work from there, DOC’s Jobs for Nature programme has helped create an enduring conservation legacy.” Jobs for Nature was established in June 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The \$1.219 billion government programme was designed to provide nature-based employment and benefit New Zealand’s environment, people and regional communities. DOC was allocated \$488 million to fund projects undertaking pest control, riparian fencing and planting, threatened species protection, habitat

restoration and restoring wetlands, rivers and streams.

“Jobs for Nature provides an opportunity for the Government to work together with Māori, local government, community groups, and the private sector to develop a long-term strategy for investment in nature. “The mix of short-term projects that have already wrapped up to longer term projects funded through to 2024, means the programme has been agile in responding to different community needs. “With so much achieved for communities and the environment at the programme’s halfway point, it’s exciting to think how much more can be achieved over the programme’s lifetime.”

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Massive Government Infrastructure Spend to Unlock Thousands More Homes, Stimulate Growth

Critical infrastructure projects to kick-start new housing developments, and accelerate growth in Lower Hutt, Nelson, Rangiora, Ngāruawāhia, Hastings, Motueka, Whanganui and Lake Hāwea are being made possible thanks to a massive \$192 million Government investment, Housing Minister Megan Woods announced in Hastings today. “This Government infrastructure funding helps councils, iwi and developers make sure critical infrastructure like pipes, roads and wastewater connections, is in place, so thousands more homes can be built and communities can thrive. “The investment, announced today, is expected to enable around 11,500 homes across multiple housing developments over the next 10 to 15 years, including public, affordable, market and papakāinga housing.

“The projects, which otherwise may not have been possible, or faced significant delays, include road improvements and upgrades to the wastewater network in Hastings, approximately two kilometres of new stormwater pipeline in Lower Hutt, a new reticulated wastewater treatment connection in Lake Hāwea, and a road extension in Whanganui. “Our strong economic management and advantageous global fiscal position means we are well placed to build on our investments in the critical services New Zealanders need, like stimulating growth, addressing climate change, and of course housing. “Direct Government investment in infrastructure through our Infrastructure Acceleration Fund (IAF) shows how we as a Government are not afraid to do things differently and supports our plan to drive up housing supply, ultimately getting more people into affordable, warm, dry, homes and onto the housing ladder.

“Today’s announcement follows on from earlier IAF funding allocations of \$6.1 million in December 2021 for Kenepuru Landing in Porirua, and almost \$179 million in July 2022, which was shared between seven regions (Rotorua, Ōmokoroa, Kaikōura, Ōtaki, Napier, Gisborne and New Plymouth). “This means, to date, around \$376

million in IAF funding has been committed to critical infrastructure projects throughout the country. Combined, these IAF-funded projects are expected to enable around 20,000 new homes in areas of high housing need. “There are a further 15 IAF proposals currently undergoing due diligence and negotiation, and we look forward to announcing more successful proposals in the coming months as agreements are signed. “We know the only way we are going to solve the housing crisis, and to bring costs down, is to build more houses,” Megan Woods said.

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Mobile Animal Care Vehicles to Improve Emergency Rescue Response

People in rural and regional parts of the state concerned for the safety of their pets and livestock during extreme weather events will have better access to mobile animal care services, thanks to a \$2.5 million investment from the NSW Government. Minister for Agriculture and Western NSW Dugald Saunders said the Mobile Animal Care Services 2022 Grant Program is now open for eligible groups to apply for funding. “In the flood events on the North Coast, mobile animal care service vehicles played an important role in supporting the emergency response and recovery of impacted communities. Our goal is to help minimise the devastating consequences of any future natural disasters and to be even more prepared to care for animals in urgent need,” Mr Saunders said. “This new program is specifically to fund mobile animal care services, such as trucks or vans, to bolster animal care and capabilities during these peak critical times and enable more efficient rescue and treatment of pets and livestock during an emergency response.

“These vehicles will also be an instrumental resource to provide routine treatments and preventative care for pets and livestock in areas of need, particularly in regional areas experiencing a shortage of animal care providers or services.” To be eligible to apply for Mobile Animal Care Services grant, applicants must be a non-government incorporated not-for-profit with an ABN or ACN. Services may include mobile companion animal and livestock care services, such as routine treatment and preventative care, first aid, mobile/portable holding and transport, or mobile veterinary clinic services. If the applicant plans on providing veterinary services, they must comply with NSW Veterinary Practitioners Board licensing requirements. The Board must refuse to grant a license unless the applicant is a veterinary practitioner. Mr Saunders said the Mobile Animal Care Services Grant Program forms part of the NSW Government’s broader, ongoing commitment to the prevention of animal cruelty in NSW.

“During COVID, we saw a significant boom in the number of people buying pets, some of whom were just not suitable in the first place to take on such a responsibility,” Mr Saunders said. “A result of this has been a significant influx in the number of

animals being taken to pounds or sold or rehomed irresponsibly. “That’s why the NSW Government has begun an online advertising campaign encouraging prospective pet buyers to prepare appropriately for their new family member, identify problem breeders and improve their understanding of animal welfare.”

From <https://afndaily.com.au> 10/16/2022

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Kiwis to Benefit from Accelerated 5G Roll-Out

The Government is working with New Zealand’s major telecommunications network operators to accelerate the roll-out of 5G services across New Zealand and improve rural connectivity, Minister for the Digital Economy and Communications, David Clark said today. “As a result of a new agreement, many more New Zealanders will gain access to the speed, capacity and reliability of 5G services,” David Clark said. Radio spectrum underpins all wireless technology – including the roll-out of 5G mobile services. Access to spectrum has previously been sold to telecommunications providers via an auction, but this agreement will bypass that process in favour of a direct allocation method. “Network operators have been launching 5G over the last two years, using the 3.5 GHz spectrum band – the first band to be allocated specifically for high-speed 5G services. The Government provided short-term early access to this spectrum in 2020, to enable the country’s 5G roll-out to begin.

“With the expiry of short-term rights on the horizon, long-term rights must be allocated. “As part of the new agreement, our three major mobile network operators – Spark, 2degrees and Vodafone – will be required to increase the pace of the 5G roll-out to small towns across New Zealand. There is also an expectation they will continue efforts to improve rural connectivity.” Shared network infrastructure provider, Dense Air, will also have access to the 3.5 GHz spectrum band as part of this deal – helping network operators serve the hardest to reach parts of the country. “The agreement complements other Government investment, including \$60 million for rural connectivity allocated through Budget 2022 and \$47 million towards the Rural Capacity Upgrades I announced in February 2022,” David Clark said. The details of this long-term allocation will continue to be worked through over the coming months as the Crown negotiates final contracts with the parties involved. Further information is available on the Radio Spectrum Management website.

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One Stop Ticketing Solution for Public Transport

Whether it’s on the bus, train or ferry, New Zealanders will soon be able to use a singlepayment system across Aotearoa, with today’s signing of the National Ticketing Solution contract with supplier Cubic, Transport Minister Michael Wood has announced. “This is a key milestone in the journey to grow public transport use by

providing a single payment system and a range of easy-to-use payment methods, no matter where you are in the country,” Michael Wood said. “Our government is committed to making it more affordable, easier and attractive for Kiwis to use public transport. Through our investments we are delivering linked up public transport networks across the country that help people get to where they want to go. “When implemented, the NTS will offer a wide range of benefits to public transport users. The payment system will be convenient, easy to use, and offer a consistent customer experience.

“Customers will be able to choose what payment method works best for them. They will be able to pay for public transport using contactless debit or credit cards, as well as digital payment methods like Apple Pay or Google Pay, while still offering the option of using a pre-paid transit card. “This new technology will allow daily weekly and monthly fare caps to be applied to travel automatically, meaning customers will be charged the best possible fare at the end of each day. It will also mean that when travelling to a new town, people will be able to pay using what’s already in their pocket, rather than having to buy a transit card specific to that region or fumble for cash. “The NTS will be an enabler for change. To encourage public transport as the preferred travel choice for more people, more often, we must invest in modern technologies to improve the customer experience.

“Cubic have the proven experience of delivering this solution, meaning New Zealanders can have confidence that they are getting a platform that works,” Michael Wood said. As well as the contract between Waka Kotahi and Cubic, a participation agreement has also been finalised between Public Transport Authorities, Auckland Transport, Greater Wellington Regional Council, Environment Canterbury, and a Regional Consortium of ten smaller councils, to deliver the solution. “The local authorities saw the benefits that the NTS can provide to the decarbonisation and economic development of their regions. “Through improved access and increased patronage of public transport, roads will become less congested, safer and we will reduce our emissions,” Michael Wood said. The National Ticketing Solution will be rolled out in a stage process across the different public transport authorities, starting with Environment Canterbury in 2024.

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5、 Public Finance

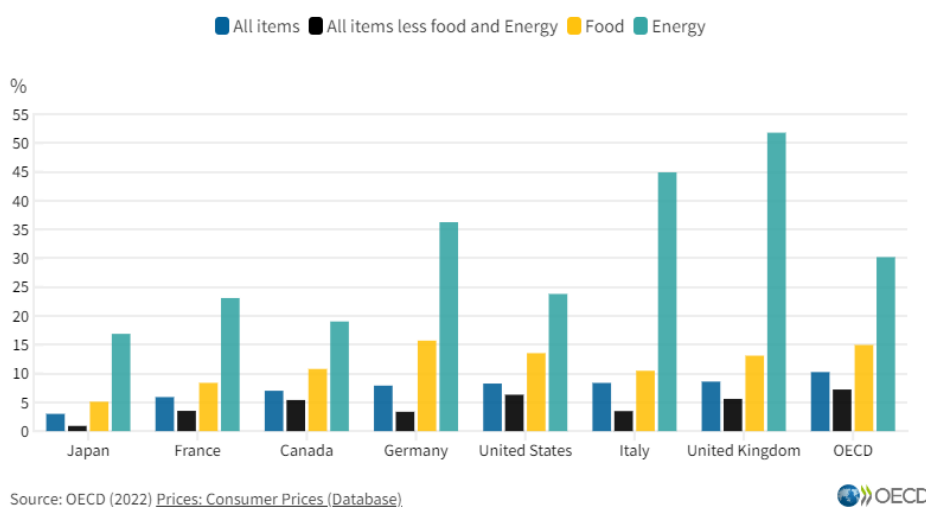
Asia-Pacific

OECD Inflation at 10.3% in August 2022, Broadly Stable for Past Three Months

Year-on-year inflation in the OECD as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) was broadly stable in August 2022, reaching 10.3%, after 10.2% in July and 10.3% in June (Figure 1). Between July and August 2022, headline inflation decreased in 16 of 38 OECD countries mainly driven by slower increases in energy prices. However, 15 OECD countries continued to record double-digit inflation in August 2022, with the highest rates observed in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Türkiye (all above 20%). Energy price inflation in the OECD fell to 30.2% year-on-year in August 2022, down from 35.3% in July 2022, with declines in more than 60% of OECD countries. By contrast, both food price inflation and inflation excluding food and energy kept rising in the OECD in August 2022. Year-on-year inflation was also broadly constant in the G7 countries reaching 7.5% in August 2022. Headline inflation declined in Canada, France, the United Kingdom and the United States, driven by a slowdown in energy prices, while it rose in Germany, Italy and Japan. Inflation excluding food and energy was the main contributor to headline inflation in Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, while the combined contribution of food and energy prices drove headline inflation in France, Germany, Italy and Japan (Figure 2).

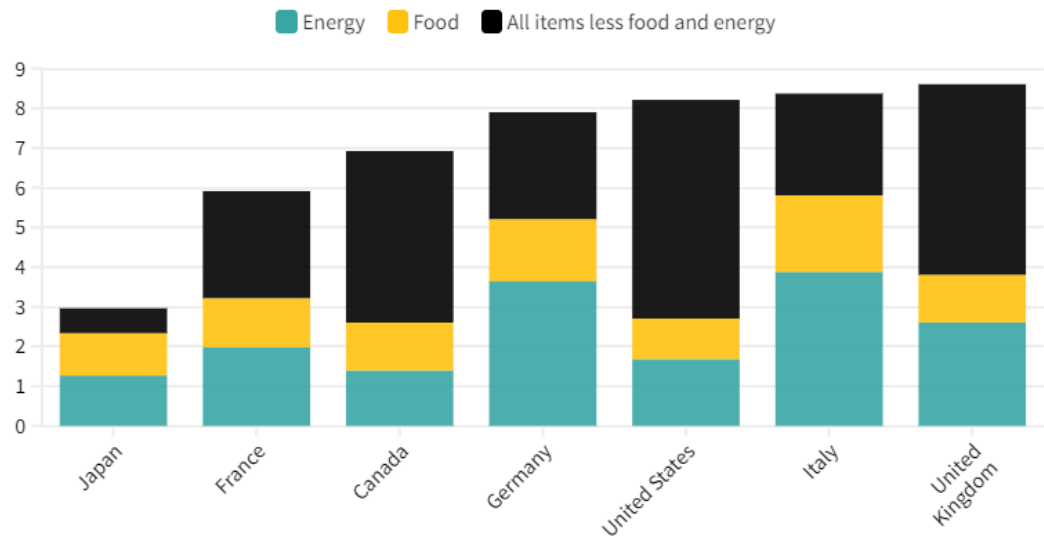
In the euro area, year-on-year inflation as measured by the Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices (HICP) rose to 9.1% in August 2022, from 8.9% in July 2022, as the rise in food price inflation and in inflation excluding food and energy more than compensated for the deceleration in energy prices. Eurostat's flash estimate for the euro area in September 2022 points to a further increase in year-on-year inflation (to 10.0%), with inflation excluding food and energy estimated to have increased to 4.8% up from 4.3% in August 2022 and energy price inflation to 40.8% up from 38.6% in August 2022. In the G20, year-on-year inflation remained stable in August 2022, at 9.2% for the third consecutive month. Outside the OECD, year-on-year inflation rose in Argentina, India and Saudi Arabia, but decreased in Brazil, China, Indonesia and

Figure 1 - Consumer prices, G7 economies and OECD - Headline
August 2022, year-on-year inflation rate



South Africa.

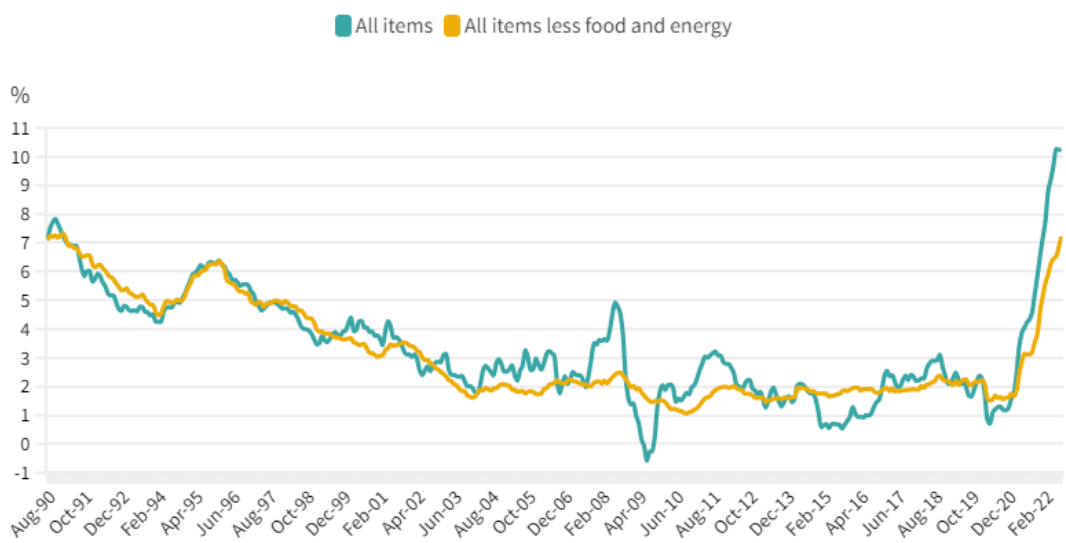
Figure 2 - Contribution to year-on-year CPI inflation in the G7 countries
August 2022, percentage points



Source: OECD (2022) [Consumer Prices \(Database\)](#)



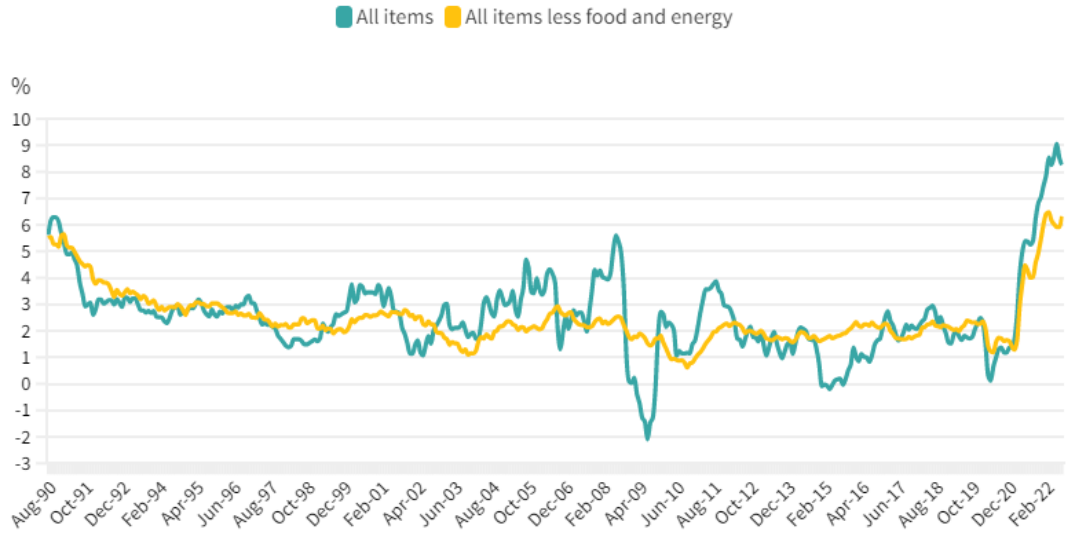
Figure 3 - Inflation since 1990's: All items and all items excluding food and energy
OECD (CPI), year-on-year inflation rate



Source: OECD (2022) [Prices: Consumer Prices \(Database\)](#)



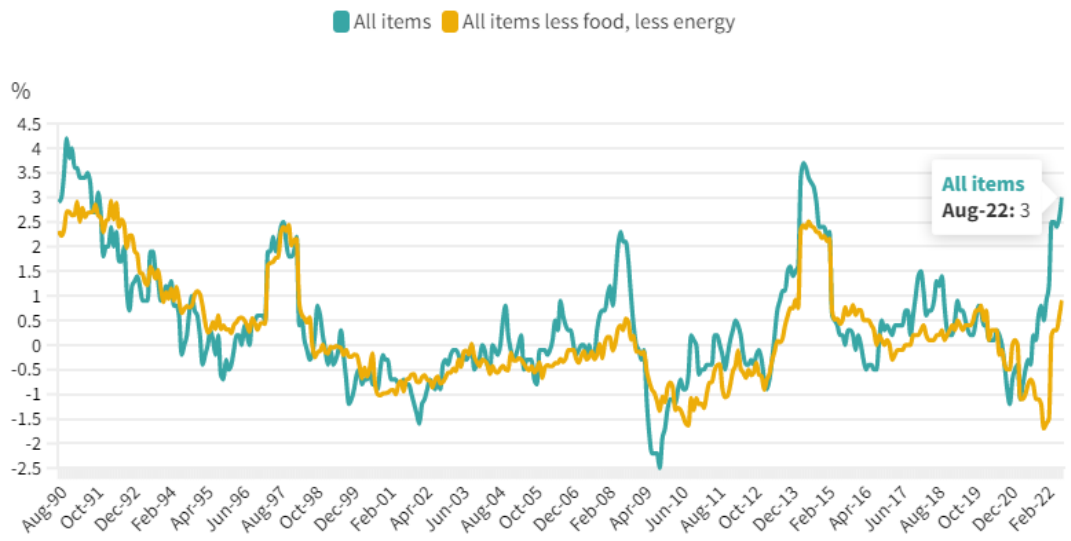
Figure 3 - Inflation since 1990's: All items and all items excluding food and energy
 United States (CPI), year-on-year inflation rate



Source: OECD (2022) [Prices: Consumer Prices \(Database\)](#).



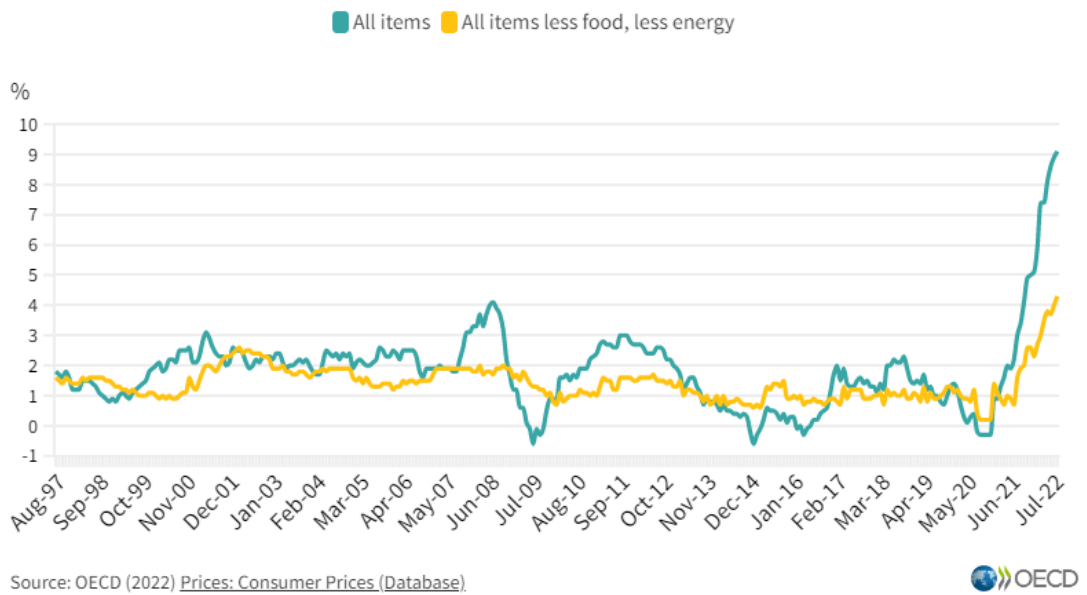
Figure 3 - Inflation since 1990's: All items and all items excluding food and energy
 Japan (CPI), year-on-year inflation rate



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



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World Bank Group Resolute Against Corruption amid Historic Global Challenges in Fiscal Year 2022

The World Bank Group today highlighted its efforts to advance the fight against fraud and corruption in the development projects it finances, with the release of its [Sanctions System Annual Report for fiscal year 2022](#). The joint report of the World Bank Group's Integrity Vice Presidency (INT), Office of Suspension and Debarment (OSD), and Sanctions Board, illustrates how in a time of increasingly complex global challenges and historic development support by the World Bank Group, the institution's sanctions system was resolute in maintaining its anticorruption oversight of the institution's development financing. *"While our institution continues to provide historic levels of support around the world, it remains critical that these funds are used in a transparent and accountable manner and only for their intended purposes. We must be continually vigilant against corruption in the projects supported by the Bank Group,"* noted **World Bank Group President David Malpass** in the report's foreword. *"The offices that comprise the sanctions system work together to send a clear message: corruption has no place in development."*

INT is the independent unit within the World Bank Group that works to detect, deter, and prevent fraud and corruption in World Bank Group-financed operations and by World Bank Group staff and corporate vendors. OSD is the first tier of the World Bank's adjudicative system and is tasked with impartially reviewing whether there is sufficient evidence that an entity investigated by INT has engaged in sanctionable misconduct and, if so, determining an appropriate sanction. The Sanctions Board is

an independent administrative tribunal that serves as the second and final tier of review for contested sanctions cases. Together, the offices of the sanctions system play a critical role in helping the World Bank Group safeguard the resources it deploys from the damaging impacts that fraud and corruption can have on development.

In fiscal year 2022, the World Bank Group sanctioned 35 firms and individuals, of which 32 were debarred with conditional release, making them ineligible to participate in project and operations financed by the institutions of the World Bank Group. Three firms were sanctioned with conditional non-debarment, leaving them eligible, as long as they continue to meet certain agreed-upon conditions while under sanction. The institution also recognized 72 cross-debarments from other multilateral development banks (MDBs), while 30 World Bank Group debarments were eligible for recognition by other MDBs. A full list of the firms and individuals currently debarred by the World Bank Group can be found here: www.worldbank.org/debarr.

Fiscal Year 2022 Summary

The World Bank Group's sanction system continued to carry out its anticorruption mission and helped support the institution in bringing greater integrity, transparency, and accountability to the development operations supported by the World Bank Group's financing. In fiscal year 2022:

- INT received 3,380 complaint submissions, opened 330 new preliminary external investigations, and started 48 new external investigations, while closing 31 existing external investigations. INT submitted 18 sanctions cases, and 12 settlements to OSD for review. An additional three settlements were submitted to the IFC Evaluation Officer for review.
- OSD reviewed 15 cases and 12 settlements, temporarily suspended 14 firms and six individuals, and sanctioned 11 respondents via [uncontested determinations](#).
- The Sanctions Board published four [fully-reasoned decisions](#) resolving four contested sanctions cases against six respondents. The Sanctions Board convened virtual hearings in one of those cases.

Each of the sanctions related to a finding that the firm or individual engaged in at least one of the institution's five sanctionable practices—fraud, corruption, collusion, coercion, or obstruction—in connection with a World Bank Group-funded project.

- The Integrity Compliance Office (ICO), which sits within INT and works with sanctioned firms and individuals to institute reforms in alignment with the [World Bank Group's Integrity Compliance Guidelines](#) and to reduce the opportunities for future misconduct, engaged with 81 sanctioned parties toward meeting their conditions for release.
- In addition, the ICO determined that 22 entities had met their conditions for release from sanction and that two entities had met the conditions for the

conversion of their debarments with conditional release to conditional non-debarments.

The offices of the sanctions system also continued to share their anticorruption knowledge and insights:

- INT developed and facilitated trainings to nearly 2,800 World Bank Group and project implementation staff, government officials, and private sector representatives across multiple regions aimed at building local capacity to identify, manage, and mitigate integrity risks in development operations.
- OSD led the organization of a two-day symposium on Supranational Responses to Corruption in Vienna, Austria, addressing current and prospective anticorruption efforts at the supranational level.
- OSD organized multiple events regarding the [Global Suspension & Debarment Directory](#), which captures data and information on the exclusion systems of 23 different countries and institutions.
- The Sanctions Board Secretariat and OSD jointly organized and hosted the second MDB workshop among first-tier officers and appellate body secretariats to discuss substantive sanctions issues and other matters of common interest across the major development institutions.
- The Sanctions Board Secretariat authored timely thought pieces on the topics of [expedited reviews and provisional relief](#) in Sanctions Board processes and [the fair and appropriate imposition of debarments](#).

From <https://www.worldbank.org/> 10/12/2022

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ADB, AFD Renew Partnership with Joint Cofinancing Target of \$3 Billion by 2025

Asian Development Bank (ADB) President Masatsugu Asakawa and Agence Francaise de Developpement (AFD) Chief Executive Remy Rioux today signed a new Partnership Framework Agreement (PFA) to guide development collaboration in Asia and the Pacific from 2022 to 2028. ADB and AFD agreed to a joint cofinancing target of \$3 billion for 2023-2025. Activities will focus on climate change, natural resource management and biodiversity, blue economy, and social imbalances and inequalities across Asia and the Pacific. "This new agreement is a testament to our enduring partnership, which continues to strengthen as we address the challenges faced by ADB's members in Asia and the Pacific," said Mr. Asakawa. "I also appreciate that our AFD partners share ADB's commitment to support the region on its path to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals." "This new PFA provides us with the right incentives to ramp up our joint actions to address sustainability challenges in Asia where development outcomes are of global significance," said Mr. Rioux. "Our way forward is to mobilize a large and impactful range of partners, throughout Asia, by leveraging the trust ADB and AFD have now built for 25 years."

Since 2016, AFD has provided \$2.3 billion in cofinancing for 26 ADB projects worth \$5.2 billion, for a total of \$7.5 billion in financing. The new PFA will deepen collaboration in areas of mutual interest supporting sustainable and inclusive growth to reduce poverty in Asia and the Pacific. The partnership encompasses cofinancing operations, technical assistance, knowledge sharing and joint communication, knowledge production, research, and staff exchange. ADB and AFD have been engaged in collaborative activities since 1997, when they cofinanced their first project. France is among ADB's biggest bilateral cofinancing partners. AFD is France's development finance institution and has worked for 70 years to alleviate poverty and support economic growth in both developing and emerging countries. 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.

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APEC Finance Ministers Address Risks of Inflation, Promote New Growth Drivers

Finance ministers and high-level representatives from the 21 APEC member economies convened in Bangkok against the backdrop of an adverse global environment—where recovery from the pandemic remains fragile and rising inflation is necessitating financial tightening all over the world—and the increasing risk of climate change. Under the theme of “Advancing Digitalization, Achieving Sustainability,” Thailand’s Minister of Finance and the Chair of the 2022 APEC Finance Ministers’ Meeting, Arkhom Termpittayapaisith, stressed the importance of striking a balance between growth and taking care of the environment, highlighting that digitalization and sustainability “will be the key to APEC’s prosperity.” “Digitalization has proven to be a key driver of growth, especially in an increasing globalized environment,” Minister Arkhom said in his opening remarks. “Nevertheless, such growth should not come at the cost of a significantly worsening environment, which is why sustainability remains high on the global agenda, including in APEC.”

While the economic outlook remains uncertain, Minister Arkhom reflected on some of the encouraging tailwinds that can ignite a new growth cycle. “Besides digitalization and sustainability, the resurgence in the travel and tourism sector, as well as other economic activities, reflects pent-up demand,” Minister Arkhom added. “We need to deepen our cooperation in developing strategic, measured and innovative responses in order to keep the world economy steady and propel it forward, especially in the areas which require our collective action, such as climate change, sustainable development and digital connectivity,” he said. Meeting at the Queen Sirikit National Convention Center, where APEC Economic Leaders’ Week will be held in November, finance ministers deliberated about inflationary pressure, and, among other things, how to redirect stimulus measures from COVID-19 to long-term growth drivers while

maintaining fiscal sustainability.

They explored policy measures and actions to further promote digitalization and sustainability to propel economic growth including through fiscal policies, taxation regimes, redistribution programs, investment incentives, digital leverage and the pursuit of sustainable development. Ministers also heard from the APEC Policy Support Unit and representatives from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and Asian Development Bank on the regional and global economic outlook. The IMF downgraded APEC's economic growth to 2.5 percent this year, similar to the projection of the APEC Policy Support Unit. Recognizing the unprecedented risk ahead, finance ministers committed to keeping inflation at bay to mitigate the rising cost of living and poverty. They also committed to keeping trade open while protecting people from the resurgence of COVID-19 or any future pandemics.

Ministers also expressed their respective views regarding the heightened macroeconomic challenges and their effects on energy and food prices volatility. "The current political difficulties might have led to conflicting views among member economies," Minister Arkhom concluded. "However, we need to demonstrate the spirit of international cooperation which has been central to the successes of APEC over the years, engage with each other productively and constructively, as this will lead to shared prosperity that can be cherished by all."

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Minister Arkhom Termpittayapaisith's Statement on the 2022 APEC Finance Ministers' Meeting

Thailand's Minister of Finance, Arkhom Termpittayapaisith, shared with the APEC region's finance ministers a statement that reflects the outcomes of the 2022 APEC Finance Ministers' Meeting. In his statement, Minister Arkhom summarized the deliberations among APEC ministers with respect to heightened macroeconomic challenges, which includes uneven recovery that may result in widening global inequality, volatility in energy and food prices, remnant effects of the pandemic—which would contribute to supply chain disruptions and surging inflation—as well as the consequent tightening of financial conditions.

Minister Arkhom's statement reflects the consensus outcomes of the region's finance ministers in these key areas:

Sustainable finance

Digitalization for the digital economy

Implementing the Cebu Action Plan

Ministers reiterated their commitment to implementing flexible fiscal policies to support inclusive economic growth and job creation. They pledged to use all

available policy tools—monetary, fiscal and structural—individually and collectively, to the extent possible, to manage inflationary pressures and steer the global economy back to its growth path. Ministers also pledged to not adjust exchange rates for competitive purposes, highlighting that strong fundamentals and sound policies are essential to the stability of the international monetary system.

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Four Ways We Can Keep Accelerating Climate Change Financing in the Pacific

The Pacific is at the forefront of climate change action, with the small island developing states of the region among the first in the world to sound the alarm about the need to take urgent action. This message was reinforced at the recent Pacific Island Forum, where Pacific leaders declared a climate emergency that threatens the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of their people and ecosystems. This emergency takes many forms. Recently, prolonged drought has caused water shortages in Kiribati and Tuvalu, Category 5 cyclones Yasa and Harold have taken lives and destroyed infrastructure and livelihoods, and storms and rising sea levels have routinely caused coastal flooding throughout the region. Climate change impacts and risks are compounding, becoming increasingly complex, and more difficult to manage. A report from the IPCC this year says the world is at a crossroads. The imperative is clear. There is a critical need to pursue climate-resilient development and boost climate finance in the Pacific, as the window for taking transformative action is closing. The Asian Development Bank proposes four main ways to do this.

One, climate investment must be based on priority climate-related challenges, backed by the latest science and the daily realities of Pacific communities. We propose to conduct more upstream climate and disaster risk assessments that consider risks at a system level, for instance for a city or an island. This information will allow for adaptation investment planning across all sectors, such as water, health, transport, and education. We must also base our support on country priorities. Countries in the Pacific each have their own Nationally Determined Contributions, National Adaptation Plans, and Long-Term Strategies and they must be considered when it comes to climate change investment.

Two, ADB will use various regional programs, funds, and technical assistance projects to help develop investment-ready climate change responsive projects. These include the Ireland Trust Fund for Building Climate Change and Disaster Resilience in Small Island Developing States, which has seen nearly \$12 million approved for 21 projects in just three years, and the Urban Resilience Trust Fund, which will be relaunched later in the year and will, for the first time, provide financing for up to five Pacific countries. ADB is also spearheading the Blue Pacific Finance Hub to scale up ocean-climate action and sustainable blue economy investments in

the Pacific region.

Three, we must increase the amount of finance going towards projects that support low carbon and climate resilient development. Although ADB has accelerated climate finance to the Pacific (from an average of \$60 million per year from 2016 to 2018 to almost \$100 million per year from 2019 to 2021), climate finance as a share of regional commitments has increased only a small amount (from 11% to just 12%) during that period. This year, we are projecting both an increase in the overall amount of climate finance (about \$150 million) and also the share of climate finance to overall commitments (19.5%). However, the Pacific's climate financing needs are immense, so strong partnerships are also needed. As developed countries seek to increase their levels of climate finance by 2025, particularly for adaptation, we must engage with partners to improve and streamline access to climate finance, while, at the same time, Pacific countries must have a say in how climate finance is distributed and managed.

And finally, fourth, Climate finance must be more flexible and efficient. One example is the Pacific Renewable Energy Investment Facility, which uses a streamlined and programmatic approach to processing many small-value renewable energy projects throughout the region. As of December 2021, more than \$105 million in ADB loans and grants had been committed under the facility. Another emerging instrument is the policy-based operation. This instrument has commonly been used to drive public financial management and private sector development reforms, but is now being directed to promote needed climate change responses.

For instance, climate change is a key cross-cutting element of the \$150 million Sustainable and Resilient Recovery Program for Fiji, which was approved in June and is supporting the implementation of the country's Climate Change Act, which is among the world's most comprehensive pieces of climate legislation. As the world prepares to convene in Sharm El-Sheikh for COP27, the premier global climate change event, it is important this message of collective, innovative, urgent, and transformative action becomes ingrained. By prioritizing climate-resilient development, supporting regional priorities, and working together with our Pacific developing member countries and with key partners and donors, ADB is dedicated to achieving this in the Pacific. This article was prepared by Jeffrey Bowyer, Senior Climate Change Specialist at ADB's Pacific Department.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 10/21/2022

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Global Recession Inevitable Next Year, APEC Finance Ministers Say, Express Concern About Inflation

The global economy will not avoid recession next year, finance ministers of the 21 Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) members agree. They reached the

consensus at the 29th Apec Finance Ministers' Meeting on October 20 in Bangkok. Thailand's Finance Minister Arkhom Termpittayapaisith told a press conference that Apec members and delegates, and representatives from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank Group, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the Apec Policy Support Unit were well represented and eager to share their perspectives in order to find the best economic solution together. Global recession inevitable next year, Apec finance ministers say, express concern about inflation. He said that in addition to being concerned about the global recession, they were concerned about the high inflation caused by rising energy and food prices, as well as the public debt of each government, which is increasing exponentially due to the need to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic.

However, each country will be affected differently, and Thailand's economy is expected to grow by 3.7 per cent next year, up from 3.5 per cent this year, he said. It is due to a positive recovery in the tourism industry, with countries such as Japan opening their borders, he added. "Hong Kong will return soon, while China has stated that they need more time to settle things in order to be more certain," Arkhom said. In contrast, the global economy is expected to slow from 3.2 per cent growth this year to 2.7 per cent next year. Arkhom insisted that the meeting atmosphere was friendly and cheerful, but refused to discuss one of the meeting's most divisive topics, the Russia-Ukraine war. He said that members had their own different opinions. This 29th Apec Finance Ministers' Summit issued no joint statement, only a consensus to support sustainable finance and digitalisation.

Meanwhile, representatives from the IMF, ADB, and World Bank advised Apec members to implement more treasury policies to deal with the future economy. "The policy should be more directly targeted at the poorest and most vulnerable groups who are the most affected by high energy and food prices," Arkhom said. He also added that the meeting considered using the Asean Catalytic Green Finance Facility to help with the development of green infrastructure. Furthermore, the urgent need to protect the environment has prompted Apec members to launch Green bonds, Social bonds, Sustainability bonds, and Blue bonds. All aim to promote sustainability investment and the transition to net zero greenhouse gas emissions. Arkhom mentioned that the meeting also covered digitalisation and tax policy. Every member has agreed to help each other through this digital transformation.

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East Asia

CHINA: Stepping Up Financial Support for Real Economy

China has beefed up financial support to further bolster the country's real economy

this year, according to a report submitted to the National People's Congress Standing Committee on Friday. The country's monetary policy has been further strengthened and improved in 2022, with the comprehensive financing cost of enterprises steadily reducing. While keeping the total amount of financing reasonably adequate, the country's financial system has increased support for key areas, said the report. By the end of September, the outstanding amount of medium and long-term loans for the manufacturing sector jumped 30.8 percent year on year to 8.75 trillion yuan (about 1.22 trillion U.S. dollars), while outstanding loans to small and medium-sized sci-tech enterprises reached 1.56 trillion yuan, up 26.3 percent from the previous year.

The country's inclusive finance has also expanded over the past nine months, with outstanding inclusive loans for small and micro businesses jumping 24.6 percent year on year to 23.2 trillion yuan, according to the report. In the next step, financial institutions will focus more on economic transformation and upgrading and channel more funds to the advanced manufacturing sector and strategic emerging industries. Meanwhile, efforts will be made to support the construction of infrastructure and the development of major projects by making full and good use of policy-based and developmental financial instruments, according to the report.

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JAPAN: Eyeing 26 Tril. Yen Economic Package to Fight Inflation

A new economic package being compiled to help struggling households cope with inflation and support the economy will likely reach 26 trillion yen (\$174 billion), a senior ruling party lawmaker indicated Monday. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has instructed officials to draw up a new package focusing on steps to ease the pain of higher prices on households, spurring wage growth and revving up an economy still recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. Referring to the government's inflation relief package worth 2.6 trillion yen approved in September, Toshimitsu Motegi, secretary general of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, told an event organized by Kyodo News that the to-be-compiled package will be "one digit" larger. The package is expected to be unveiled on Friday. In the face of falling public support, Kishida has expressed his intention to compile a "bold" package in terms of size and substance. LDP lawmakers have been calling for it to be around 30 trillion yen, noting that the government needs to bolster domestic demand by closing the supply-demand gap of around 15 trillion yen.

Securing enough funding is a challenge for heavily-indebted Japan whose debt has ballooned to more than twice the size of the economy. Japan's core consumer inflation topped 3 percent in September, marking the sharpest gain since 1991, excluding the effects of sales tax hikes. The recent bout of inflation is largely attributed to higher energy and other raw material prices, with the yen's sharp slump

magnifying the impact. The country's inflationary pressures can be explained by the yen's weakness hurt by the Bank of Japan's monetary easing. Motegi said raising interest rates prematurely would have a negative impact on the economy, adding that "It will be difficult to go ahead with a rate hike immediately." But he also said that "it does not mean that the whole of the current bold monetary easing framework can remain without a review."

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Bank of Japan Sticks to Easing Despite Yen Pressure

The Bank of Japan stuck to its ultra-loose monetary policies Friday, even as the yen comes under pressure from aggressive tightening by the U.S. Federal Reserve and other central banks. The stark contrast between Japanese and U.S. monetary policy has caused the yen to plummet to 32-year lows against the dollar, prompting the government to intervene to prop up the currency. In a statement after a two-day policy meeting, the BOJ said it would keep measures aimed at boosting the world's third-largest economy, including its benchmark rate of minus 0.1 percent. But it also raised its inflation forecast for fiscal 2022-23 to 2.9 percent, from 2.3 percent in July, driven by higher energy and food prices. "The rate of increase is then expected to decelerate toward the middle of fiscal 2023," as the impact of these price increases wanes, its statement said. Bank of Japan policymakers have refused to move away from their ultra-loose stance, designed to encourage sustained price rises.

Meanwhile, the Fed and central banks in other major economies have embarked on a series of hawkish interest rate hikes in an effort to fight decades-high inflation. This contrast has caused the yen to plummet dramatically from around 115 against the dollar before Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February to around 146 on Friday morning. The Japanese government spent nearly \$20 billion in September in an effort to curb the yen's slide, and further expensive interventions have reportedly taken place in recent days. "The Bank of Japan policy meeting is a do-or-die moment for the Japanese yen," Edward Moya, senior market analyst of Oanda, said in a note this week. "If Japan wants to defend the yen, they might need to continue to intervene in the forex market," or artificially influence rates through buying or selling government bonds, he added. Japan is also on Friday expected to announce an economic stimulus package that local media said could be worth \$200 billion to cushion the impact of inflation and a weak yen.

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Cabinet OKs ¥29 Tril Spending Plan to Counter Inflation

Japan's cabinet approved Friday a hefty economic package including 29 trillion yen in government spending to counter the blow to household budgets from inflation,

signaling that the greater concern of its policymakers is that the economy will stall, not overheat. While central banks around the world are raising interest rates aggressively to try to tame decades-high inflation, with its own inflation rate near 3%, Japan has stuck mainly to using fiscal measures, or government spending, to counter that challenge. The Bank of Japan underscored that when, wrapping up a policy meeting Friday, it stuck to its longstanding policy of keeping its benchmark interest rate at minus 0.1%. The Federal Reserve has been aggressively raising borrowing costs to combat chronic inflation, raising interest rates five times this year. It's set to do so again next week and in December, while warning that the hikes will likely bring higher unemployment and possibly a recession.

In a televised news conference, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said the overall size of the stimulus package, including private-sector funding and fiscal measures, is expected to amount to 71.6 trillion yen and to boost economic growth by 4.6%. "The economic measures are designed to overcome rising prices and to achieve an economic recovery," Kishida said in a news conference. "We will protect the people's lives, jobs and businesses, and strengthen the economy for the future." The 29 trillion yen spending package will be part of a supplementary budget that still must be approved by the parliament. It includes about 45,000 yen subsidies for household electricity and gas bills and coupons worth 100,000 yen for women who are pregnant or rearing babies. Kishida vowed to compile and submit a budget plan and get it approved as soon as possible. The stimulus package includes subsidies for households that are largely seen as an attempt by Kishida to shore up his sagging popularity.

His government has been rocked by the revelation of close ties between the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and the South Korean-based Unification church that surfaced after the assassination of former leader Shinzo Abe in July. Globally surging prices and a weakening of the yen have amplified costs for Japan's imports, pushing inflation higher. But its economy grew at a modest 2.2% annual pace in April-June and is forecast to expand at an annual rate of about 1.7% for the year. Japan's central bank has kept interest rates near zero for years, trying to raise inflation to a target rate of 2% and spur what it calls a "virtuous cycle" of economic growth by getting consumers and businesses to spend and invest more. Even though prices finally have risen beyond the target, the central bank is forecasting they will again fall. It's also looking ahead, watching for signs that rate hikes elsewhere might lead to recessions. By keeping credit so cheap while the Fed is raising rates, the BOJ runs the risk of seeing the yen weaken further. The higher interest rates in the U.S. have led investors to dump other currencies, including the yen, for dollars, driving its value higher.

A weaker yen in turn will raise prices in Japan, since it imports much of what it consumes. Takahide Kiuchi, an executive economist at Nomura Research Institute in Tokyo, criticized the package for being mainly focused on its huge scale of spending,

rather than the quality of spending. “The bank of Japan’s ultra-easy monetary policy and the government’s fiscal spending expansion create a policy mix that harms market trust in the (Japanese) currency,” Kiuchi said. The spending package includes: 12.2 trillion yen to ease the burden of price increases and encourage wage hikes, 4.8 trillion yen for tourism, export promotion and other measures to leverage the weakness of the yen; 6.7 trillion yen on investments in measures to cope with Japan’s declining population and reduce reliance on fossil fuels and 10.6 trillion yen in spending on economic and food security and on public works.

Since the outlays will be financed by issuing government bonds, they will further strain Japan’s worsening national debt after heavy spending during the pandemic. Japan now has a long-term debt exceeding 1.2 quadrillion yen, or more than twice the size of its economy. Kishida said Friday that the government was vigilantly monitoring movements in exchange rates. Japan has spent tens of billions of dollars in market interventions to support the yen in recent weeks as the currency sank to a 32-year low against the dollar of more than 150 yen. On Friday, it was trading near 148 yen to the dollar. At the beginning of the year, it was at about 115 yen. Any market reaction to another flood of stimulus was likely already taken into account earlier in the week as share prices fell Friday in Tokyo, with the benchmark Nikkei 225 losing 0.9% to 27,105.20.

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Japan Spent Record 6.35 Tril. Yen in Oct. Yen-Buying Intervention

Japan spent a record 6.35 trillion yen (\$43 billion) when making what were likely multiple interventions in the currency market in October, Finance Ministry data showed Monday, as the nation sought to arrest the rapid depreciation of its currency. The previous high was 2.84 trillion yen set in September, thought to have been primarily spent on Sept. 22 when Japan stepped into the market by buying the yen with U.S. dollars for the first time since 1998. Since then, Japanese authorities have kept mum on any intervention, leaving financial markets on edge. The Finance Ministry did not disclose any daily breakdowns of the amount, spent between Sept. 29 and Thursday. “Stealth” interventions are designed to keep market participants guessing whether Japanese authorities are actually intervening. After the yen neared 152 to the dollar, sources have confirmed Japan intervened on Oct. 21, despite market perceptions that such operations will do little to reverse the broader trend.

Japanese monetary authorities likely stepped in again on Oct. 24 as the yen surged in just minutes relative to the dollar. Finance Minister Shunichi Suzuki had warned that necessary steps would be taken to counter excess market volatility. The main driver has been the widening gap between Japanese and U.S. interest rates as the Bank of Japan has ruled out the possibility of a near-term interest rate hike while the Federal Reserve is widely expected to go ahead with another hike in its policy

meeting later this week. The intense selling of the yen seen in recent weeks, which Japanese policymakers saw as partly driven by speculators, has been apparently taking a respite amid speculation that the Fed will slow its pace of monetary tightening. The yen was trading in the 148 zone on Monday. "The yen could have weakened further and breached 160 to the dollar without the interventions," said Izuru Kato, chief economist at the Totan Research, a Japanese think tank. But he also noted that such operations can only slow the yen's fall.

Finance chief Suzuki, whose ministry asks the BOJ to step into the market, has said it is not specific levels but volatility that Japanese officials are closely monitoring. Japan had \$1.24 trillion in foreign reserves at the end of September, consisting of foreign securities, deposits and gold among others. The government carries out yen-buying, dollar-selling interventions by tapping the funds. A weak yen has been considered a boon to Japanese exporters whose overseas profits are boosted in yen terms. But the rapid fall of the yen has created a headache for the resource-scarce Japan, inflating the import prices of energy, raw materials, food and other goods. The Japanese government unveiled Friday a massive economic package to mitigate the pain of rising prices felt by consumers, and to support the economy amid Russia's war against Ukraine and the weaker yen. However, it also hopes that the yen at its lowest level in over three decades to the dollar will fuel a recovery in inbound tourism.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has said the government is keeping close tabs on developments in the foreign exchange market with the BOJ. "Speculative and rapid yen moves are not desirable for anyone," he told a press conference on Friday. Market analysts say currency interventions cannot change the broader trend of yen weakness as the monetary policies of Japan and the United States continue to diverge. For his part, BOJ Governor Haruhiko Kuroda has rejected the idea that the central bank's yield curve control program, aimed at keeping interest rates at rock-bottom levels, has been causing the yen's depreciation. A strong dollar can help ease inflationary pressure in the world's largest economy where the inflation rate is at a multi-decade high and U.S. President Joe Biden has not seen it as a source of concern ahead of key midterm elections in early November. "The United States has so far been tolerant of Japan's response because the influence of the Japanese economy has been relatively declining," Kato said. "That said, however, if Japan were to sell massive U.S. Treasuries (it holds) to secure the funds to intervene, the United States would urge Japan to stop its intervention policy," he added.

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SOUTH KOREA: Vows 'Preemptive, Appropriate' Steps Against Financial Market Instability

Finance Minister Choo Kyung-ho said Tuesday the government will implement

appropriate responses preemptively by reviewing all options available in accordance with possible scenarios of financial and foreign exchange market instabilities. Choo made the remarks during a parliamentary audit into his ministry, voicing concerns that the current unstable market situation is feared to continue for quite a long time. South Korea's stocks have tumbled, and its currency has suffered sharp weakness against the U.S. dollar recently amid concerns over a global economic recession amid aggressive rate hikes by the United States and other major economies. "High inflation caused by external factors has caused difficulties for ordinary people and vulnerable groups, and led to greater volatility in the financial and foreign exchange market. Concerns over an economic slowdown has risen amid weakening momentum for exports and investment," Choo said. "The government will take all steps at an appropriate time and in a preemptive manner by closely reviewing the market situation and all possible scenarios," he added. He also vowed efforts to boost financial soundness to improve the sovereign credit rating.

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Gov't to Expand Liquidity Programs amid Corporate Bond Market Jitters

South Korea's financial authorities announced plans Sunday to expand liquidity supply programs to at least 50 trillion won (US\$34.7 billion) as part of efforts to calm corporate bond market jitters. Finance Minister Choo Kyung-ho made the announcement right after an emergency meeting with the central bank chief and top financial regulators in response to increased concerns about a possible credit and liquidity crunch. "Amid the growing concerns in the corporate bond and short-term money markets, and to prevent a liquidity crunch, we plan to activate more liquidity programs on top of existing market stabilization measures, expanding the fund to 50 trillion won and more," Choo told reporters. In line with such efforts, the government plans to activate the bond market stabilization fund of 1.6 trillion won starting Monday, and proactively purchase corporate bonds and commercial papers. It will also raise the ceiling for corporate bond-buying by such state-run banks as the Korea Development Bank and the Industrial Bank of Korea to 16 trillion won, double the current 8 trillion won.

The country will also supply 3 trillion won by utilizing the fund of the Korea Securities Finance Corporation to supply liquidity to brokerage firms facing challenges due to project-financing asset-backed commercial papers (PF-ABCP), according to the finance ministry. It said the Korea Housing and Urban Guarantee Co. and the Korea Housing Finance Corporation will allocate 5 trillion won each to support real estate project-financing programs facing a short-term liquidity crisis despite managing stable projects. Attending the session were Bank of Korea Gov. Rhee Chang-yong; Kim Joo-hyun, the chair of the Financial Services Commission; Lee Bok-hyun, chief of the Financial Supervisory Service; and Choi Sang-mok, senior presidential

secretary for economic affairs. South Korea's corporate bond market has been jolted by a default on debt linked to the construction of the Legoland theme park in Gangwon Province. Late last month, Iwon Jeil Cha, a special purpose company established by the Gangwon Jungdo Development (GJC) that is to fund the construction of the resort, missed the debt payment. It was then listed as bankrupt earlier this month. The amusement park opened in the city of Chuncheon in the province, 75 kilometers northeast of Seoul, in May.

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S. Korea to Expand Climate Finance for Developing Nations PM

Prime Minister Han Duck-soo said Thursday that South Korea will increase its funding to help developing nations mitigate the impacts of climate change. South Korea "will strongly support developing nations' efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and respond to climate change," Han told a conference on sustainable dialogue in the pan-Pacific region. Han said South Korea will increase its overseas aid on climate finance and expand its funding for the Green Climate Fund, an international organization on fighting climate change. Han also emphasized that the world must have a united front for a "green recovery" that guarantees sustainability and resilience. South Korea will share its experience and technology with developing nations to help them shift to a low-carbon economy and develop renewable energy sources, Han said.

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S. Korea to Invest 4.12 Tln Won in R&D for 12 Strategic Technologies in 2023

South Korea will funnel 4.12 trillion won (US\$2.9 billion) into research and development next year to promote 12 selected strategic technologies as part of the country's long-term future growth plan, the science ministry said Friday. The Ministry of Science and ICT said in a report released at a meeting with President Yoon Suk-yeol that it has picked 12 strategic technologies to focus its capacity and efforts on in order to maintain growth momentum in the influential and emerging sectors. The 12 technologies are semiconductors and displays, rechargeable batteries, advanced mobility, next generation nuclear power, advanced biology, aerospace and ocean engineering, hydrogen, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, next generation communications, advanced robotics and quantum technology. It said 4.12 trillion won has been set aside for the project next year, up from 3.74 trillion won in 2022.

Local companies and organizations who are engaged in R&D and international cooperation projects related to the 12 technologies and train top-level human resources in the fields will be funded by the government. The ministry will help them

pass state-led preliminary economic feasibility studies through a fast-track process, it added. "As the strategic technologies will affect our country's fate, the government will do its utmost to lead future growth and secure technology sovereignty," Science Minister Lee Jong-ho said.

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South-East Asia

INDONESIA: Raising Benchmark Interest Rate to 4.75 Pct to Control Inflation

Indonesia's central bank, Bank Indonesia, on Thursday raised its benchmark interest rate for the third consecutive month to curb deepening inflation and stabilize its currency exchange rate amid uncertainty in global financial markets. The two-day meeting of the Board of Governors of Bank Indonesia from Wednesday to Thursday decided to raise the benchmark interest rate by 50 basis points to 4.75 percent. The decision aimed to "lower inflation expectations that are currently overshooting," Bank Indonesia Governor Perry Warjiyo said in a virtual press conference. The central bank started raising its benchmark interest rate in August, the first time since November 2018, to a total of 125 basis points to date. Statistics Indonesia has announced September inflation this year at 5.95 percent year on year, a hike compared to the same month last year of 1.60 percent year on year. The central bank estimated that domestic economic growth this year will be around 4.5 to 5.3 percent, supported by increased private consumption, strong exports and maintained public purchasing power amid rising inflation.

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Indonesia's FDI Valued Nearly 11 Bln USD in Q3

Indonesia has recorded a total of 169 trillion Indonesian rupiahs (about 10.85 billion U.S. dollars) of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the third quarter of 2022. The FDI realization growth in the third quarter reached 63.6 percent on a yearly basis, the country's Investment Minister Bahlil Lahadalia said at a press conference. China, Singapore, Japan, and China's Hong Kong were the main sources of Indonesia's FDI between July and September this year. According to the ministry, the country's total investment realization in the third quarter reached 307.8 trillion rupiahs (19.7 billion U.S. dollars), up by 1.9 percent of the value in the same quarter of the previous year. The investment in the third quarter went into several main sectors, mainly those on metal and non-machine businesses, transportation, housing and electricity. The Indonesian government has set an investment realization target of 1,200 trillion rupiahs (77.05 billion U.S. dollars) in 2022.

From <https://english.news.cn> 10/24/2022

CAMBODIA: Tax Revenue Up 23 Pct in First 9 Months

Cambodia collected 4.7 billion U.S. dollars from all sources of taxes in the first nine months of 2022, up 23 percent from 3.81 billion dollars in the same period last year, officials said on Wednesday. The Southeast Asian country has two institutions responsible for collecting taxes. One is the General Department of Customs and Excise (GDCE), which collects taxes on goods entering and leaving the country, and the other is the General Department of Taxation (GDT), which focuses on interior taxes such as income tax, salary tax, value added tax, and property tax. GDCE's director-general Kun Nhem said the GDCE earned 2.02 billion dollars in customs and excise revenue during the January-September period this year, up 19 percent year on year. "The figure is good, achieving 78.61 percent of the target set for the entirety of 2022," he said during a press conference. Meanwhile, GDT's director-general Kong Vibol said the GDT made 2.68 billion dollars in tax revenue during the first nine months of this year, up 27 percent year on year. He said the GDT has achieved 95 percent of the target set for 2022.

From <https://english.news.cn> 10/05/2022

ADB Approves \$32.5 Million Financing to Boost Cambodia Border Health Services

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved \$32.5 million in financing to improve access to quality health services in Banteay Meanchey, a border province in northwest Cambodia that serves as a hub for departing and returning migrants, and those seeking employment in the province's special economic zones. The Cambodia Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Border Areas Health Project will expand health care coverage for migrant workers who are increasingly neglected by health systems at home and abroad, and for the populations in border areas where migrants pass through and reside. The project will extend a concessional loan of \$27 million and a grant of up to \$5.5 million to the Government of Cambodia to build and equip health facilities in border areas, extend health-care-related financial protection to migrants, and strengthen systems for the integrated delivery of health services across borders, including introducing a portable electronic health record for migrants.

"Regional cooperation and integration across the Greater Mekong Subregion has fueled economic growth, but also the greater movement of people in search of better jobs and opportunities," said ADB Senior Social Sector Specialist for Southeast Asia Rikard Elfving. "This has generated a unique set of mobility-linked health challenges, especially for border areas linked to major economic corridors." Health systems in border areas are often inadequately equipped to respond to mobility-linked health challenges, as illustrated during the COVID-19 pandemic when more than 260,000

Cambodian migrant workers returned home. The majority re-entered through land borders with Thailand, overwhelming the capacity of border area health systems for COVID-19 case detection, quarantine, and treatment.

GMS countries have collectively agreed on the need to enhance protection of vulnerable communities from the health impacts of regional integration and have prioritized strengthening health systems in border areas. Investment in migrant-inclusive health systems will facilitate the resumption of safe migration that is critical to the subregion's post-COVID-19 recovery. The Greater Mekong Subregion Border Areas Health Project will build upon ADB's experience in supporting communicable disease control programs and will integrate lessons from Cambodia's response to, and recovery from, the COVID-19 pandemic.

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ADB Approves 32.5 Mln USD to Cambodia for Improving Health Services for Migrants

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved 32.5 million U.S. dollars in financing to Cambodia for improving access to quality health services in northwest Banteay Meanchey province, the Manila-based lender said in a statement on Thursday. Banteay Meanchey shares border with Thailand and the province serves as a hub for departing and returning migrants, and those seeking employment in the province's special economic zones. The Cambodia Greater Mekong Subregion Border Areas Health Project will expand health care coverage for migrant workers who are increasingly neglected by health systems at home and abroad, and for the populations in border areas where migrants pass through and reside, the statement said. The project will extend a concessional loan of 27 million dollars and a grant of up to 5.5 million dollars to the Cambodian government to build and equip health facilities in border areas, extend health care related financial protection to migrants, and strengthen systems for the integrated delivery of health services across borders, including introducing a portable electronic health record for migrants, it added. "Regional cooperation and integration across the Greater Mekong Subregion has fueled economic growth, but also the greater movement of people in search of better jobs and opportunities," said ADB senior social sector specialist Rikard Elfving. "This has generated a unique set of mobility linked health challenges, especially for border areas linked to major economic corridors," he said. Health systems in border areas are often inadequately equipped to respond to mobility linked health challenges, as illustrated during the COVID-19 pandemic when more than 260,000 Cambodian migrant workers returned home, the statement said. The majority re-entered through land borders with Thailand, overwhelming the capacity of border area health systems for COVID-19 case detection, quarantine, and treatment, it added. "Investment in migrant-inclusive health systems will facilitate the resumption of safe migration that is critical to the subregion's post-COVID-19 recovery," the statement said.

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Cambodia Needs 9.22 Bln USD for Next 3-Year Public Investment Program

The Cambodian government on Friday approved the next three-year public investment program (2023-2025), which would require a total capital of 9.22 billion U.S. dollars to implement 663 projects, government spokesperson Phay Siphon said. The approval was made during a weekly cabinet meeting presided over by Prime Minister Samdech Techo Hun Sen, he said. The projects include 189 ongoing projects with a budget of about 5.11 billion dollars and 474 new projects with a budget of about 4.11 billion dollars, he added. Siphon said the public investment program was essential to supporting Cambodia's socio-economic recovery in the post-COVID-19 era. "Some 13.4 percent of the program's total investment will be allocated to social projects, 43.6 percent to economy-driven projects, 37.4 percent to infrastructure projects, and 5.6 percent to service and inter-sectoral projects," he said.

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Cambodian Gov't Approves 9.64 Bln USD for 2023 Draft Budget, Up 13 Pct

The Cambodian government on Friday approved a draft budget of about 9.64 billion U.S. dollars for 2023, up 13 percent compared to that in 2022. The approval was made during a weekly cabinet meeting, which was chaired by Prime Minister Samdech Techo Hun Sen, government spokesperson Phay Siphon wrote on his Facebook page. According to the draft budget released by the Ministry of Economy and Finance, the 2023 budget is equal to 29.87 percent of the Southeast Asian country's gross domestic product (GDP). To meet the expenditure, the Cambodian government is expected to earn a total revenue of 7.21 billion U.S. dollars next year, up 14.5 percent from this year, according to the budget bill. The government has also planned to borrow 1.7 billion Special Drawing Right (SDR), or nearly 2.2 billion U.S. dollars, from countries and development partners in 2023. The Southeast Asian country's economy is expected to grow by 6.6 percent in 2023 from 5.4 percent in 2022, according to the budget bill. The expenditure next year would mainly focus on general administration, health, education, sports, economy-driven sector, social sector, national defense, security and public order. The draft budget for 2023 needs to be approved by the National Assembly, the lower house of the parliament of Cambodia.

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MALAYSIA: Parliament Reconvenes with 2023 Budget in Sight

Malaysia's lower house of parliament reconvened on Monday with the national budget for 2023 expected to be tabled by the end of the week. Among other pressing matters will be the economic challenges and preparations for an expected flood season, according to state news agency Bernama. The government is expected to face questions from lawmakers on the welfare and well-being of the people as rising food prices and a depreciating ringgit have created societal pressures, with the government having taken steps to curb inflation. Also high on the agenda are the government's efforts to prepare for severe flooding expected during the monsoon season which will begin in November and is expected to last into the early part of next year. Flood preparations have drawn more attention following severe flooding in the early part of this year which left over 50 people dead and tens of thousands displaced. Several laws are also scheduled to be passed including anti-stalking whether virtually or otherwise, which will be an offense punishable by imprisonment for up to three years, a fine, or both if convicted.

From <https://english.news.cn> 10/03/2022

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Malaysia Outlines Expansionary National Budget with Eye on Welfare, Economic Growth

The Malaysian government led by Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob on Friday proposed an expansionary national budget aimed at helping the country recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. The budget for 2023 has been allocated 372.3 billion ringgit (80.06 billion U.S. dollars) compared to 332.1 billion ringgit (71.42 billion U.S. dollars) allocated for 2022. In his budget speech at the country's lower house of parliament, Finance Minister Tengku Zafrul Abdul Aziz said the government will seek to insulate the country against uncertainties caused by the global situation, including disruptions caused by the conflict in Ukraine, a sluggish global economy and rising inflation. "The 2023 budget is responsible for balancing the fiscal policy expansion by implementing fiscal reforms toward long-term financial sustainability of the government. This budget is responsible for building the country's resilience to face any coming crisis," he said.

"Budget 2023 will be immediately responsive to any challenge, through comprehensive assistance to the Malaysian Family, including the B40, M40, women, youth, the disabled and all vulnerable segments of society," he said, referring to the bottom 40 percent of Malaysians who are low wage earners and the 40 percent who make up the middle class. Zafrul also said the government would take steps to ensure economic growth with development spending being increased to 94.3 billion ringgit compared to 71.2 billion ringgit for 2022. The government has doubled spending for social assistance and subsidies to alleviate the cost of living, with 11.3 percent of the budget's operating expenditure earmarked for that purpose compared

to 5.2 percent in 2022. Funds have also been set aside for the green agenda with 3 billion ringgit for the Green Technology Financing Scheme (GTFS). The government also plans to introduce a carbon tax. The government also aims to spur the tourism sector with 500 million ringgit in tourism financing from the central bank, 200 million ringgit to promote tourism recovery and 90 million ringgit in grants to promote tourism activities among other initiatives.

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Malaysia's Pension Fund Investment Income Down 21 Pct in H1

Malaysia's pension fund Employees Provident Fund (EPF) said Friday that its total investment income fell 21 percent to 27 billion ringgit (5.81 billion U.S. dollars) for the first half of this year from 34.06 billion ringgit (7.32 billion U.S. dollars) a year ago. The fund said in a statement that the lower investment income was due to market reaction to the elevated risk of both slower global growth and high inflation, not experienced by major economies since the 1970s. Underlying risks include the protracted Ukraine-Russia conflict, which disrupted global supply chains that sent prices soaring, rise in global inflation rates hitting multi-decade highs, and in-step interest rate hikes by numerous central banks, in response partly to U.S. Federal Reserve rate hikes and partly to inflationary pressures, it said. The fund also said these risks had been flagged at the beginning of the year, but the rate at which they materialized was unprecedented, like the magnitude and speed of U.S. Fed rate hikes. All these factors had intensified and resulted in most markets posting their worst first half of a year in decades, with U.S. stocks recording their worst in more than 50 years, it added.

Not insulated from global market events, the EPF's total gross investment income for the second quarter was 11.14 billion ringgit (2.4 billion U.S. dollars), down from 14.77 billion ringgit (3.18 billion U.S. dollars) recorded in the same quarter last year. The EPF remained cautious about key risks that continued to rattle markets and the investor sentiment, such as soaring global inflation rates, geopolitical tensions and tightening of monetary policies. It noted crude oil prices have witnessed a decline amid the growing threat of an economic recession, while further aggressive interest rate hikes by central banks are also expected to slow economic growth and impact equity and fixed income markets. "Markets are still very volatile, and while we are deeply concerned by these developments, we maintain our long-term and balanced approach in our investment decisions as there are pockets of opportunities which we can capitalize on during this challenging time," said the fund.

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PHILIPPINES: \$1.87-Billion Civil Works Contracts Signed for ADB-Financed South Commuter Railway Project

The Philippines' Department of Transportation today signed four civil works contracts totaling \$1.87 billion for the South Commuter Railway Project (SCRP). The project, which will lay nearly 55 kilometers of railway segment to connect Metro Manila with Laguna province, is being financed with \$4.3 billion in loans approved by ADB in June 2022. The South Commuter Railway Project is part of the North–South Commuter Railway (NSCR) network, which is ADB's largest infrastructure financing in Asia and the Pacific to date. ADB is also financing construction of the Malolos–Clark Railway Project, which comprises the northern segment of the railway network. "This project will open tremendous opportunities for economic integration across Metro Manila and neighboring provinces and create a significant positive impact on the local economy," said ADB Deputy Director General for Southeast Asia Winfried Wicklein during the contract signing ceremony held at the Jose Rizal Monument in Calamba City.

"It will strengthen the country's economic recovery, create as many as 35,000 construction jobs and more than 3,000 permanent jobs during the railway operation, and improve access for residents of Laguna province to employment in Metro Manila," he said. Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. witnessed the signing of the civil works contracts, undertaken by Transportation Secretary Jaime Bautista, and delivered the keynote speech at the event. Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to the Philippines Kim Inchul and Ambassador of Türkiye Niyazi Evren Akyol delivered messages at the ceremony, while Calamba City Mayor Roseller Rizal gave the welcome remarks. Once completed, the South Commuter Railway will provide affordable, safe, and fast public transport, help ease road traffic congestion, and contribute to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in line with the Philippines' climate change agenda. It is estimated that the project will reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by over 284,000 tons of carbon dioxide annually as commuters switch from road to rail transportation. More than 600,000 passengers are expected to use the entire NSCR system daily by 2040.

Under the project, 18 elevated and at-grade stations will be built and provide safe access for all, including the elderly, women, children, and people with disabilities. The South Commuter Railway will connect to the future Metro Manila Subway system and be designed to withstand typhoons and earthquakes. Travel time between Manila and Calamba using the railway will be reduced by over half, from 2.5 hours currently by road. ADB is funding the civil works for the railway viaduct, stations, bridges, tunnels, and depot buildings, while the Japan International Cooperation Agency is funding the rolling stock and railway systems. The project is one of the Philippines' infrastructure flagship projects (IFP). Other IFPs financed by ADB include the Metro Manila Bridges Project approved in 2021, the EDSA Greenways Project in 2020, the Angat Water Transmission Improvement Project in 2016 and additional financing in 2020, the Malolos Clark Railway Project in 2019, and the Improving Growth Corridors in Mindanao Road Sector Project in 2017.

THAILAND: Airways Expects Return to Stock Market by 2025 as Revised Rehab Approved

Ailing Thai Airways International (THAI) has expressed confidence in completing rehabilitation within two years and returning to the stock market by 2025, after its new rehab plan was approved. THAI's CEO Suvadhana Sibunruang confirmed on Thursday that the Central Bankruptcy Court had approved the national carrier's revised plan for financial restructuring. He said the airline would now hire a financial adviser to implement the rehab plan as soon as possible to return THAI to sustainable profitability. He expects the plan to be implemented from the beginning of next year. Under the plan, THAI will launch a 25-billion-baht rights issue while securing 12.5 billion baht in credit to ensure liquidity for its 2023 budget. It will also refund purchases of all unused tickets by January 31, 2024. The airline's current cash flow is reported to be around 20 billion baht. Suvadhana said THAI expects to resume stock market trading in 2025 after returning to continuous profit. Its profitability since filing its revised rehab plan with the Central Bankruptcy Court in July would likely continue as passenger numbers grow and the airline cuts costs and boosts revenue, he added. The airline originally filed for bankruptcy protection in late 2019 after reporting accumulated debt of 245 billion baht. In May 2020, the Cabinet gave the rehabilitation plan the green light. The revised plan was issued after THAI halved its workforce from over 29,000 to 14,000, reduced its fleet to 58 aircraft and forecast better-than-expected performance with cabin loads at 80 per cent or higher this year.

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Thailand Offers Tax Breaks to Lure Foreign, Domestic Investment in Four Economic Corridors

A meeting of the Special Economic Zone Policy Committee chaired by Prime Minister Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha on Friday approved measures to lure investment in four economic corridors for target industries. The Board of Investment (BOI) will issue the measures, a government spokesman said.

- The Northern Economic Corridor – Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai, Lamphun and Lampang – will target creative, digital, wellness tourism, agriculture and food companies.
- The Northeastern Economic Corridor – Nakhon Ratchasima, Khon Kaen, Udon Thani, and Nong Khai – will target bioeconomy, agriculture and food companies.
- The Central-Western Economic Corridor – Ayutthaya, Nakhon Pathom, Suphanburi, and Kanchanaburi – will target electrical appliances, electronics, agriculture and food companies.

- The Southern Economic Corridor – Chumphon, Ranong, Surat Thani, and Nakhon Si Thammarat – will target bioeconomy, wellness tourism, agriculture and food companies.

The committee approved promotional measures to establish an ecosystem for target industries, offer tax and non-tax benefits for investors, develop infrastructure to promote business, procure funding sources, and amend existing regulations to make it easier to register and operate target industries. The committee also granted BOI promotional privileges to another 17 types of business in the border special economic zones of Tak, Songkhla, Sa Kaew, Trat, Chiang Rai, Nong Khai, Nakhon Phanom, Mukdahan, Kanchanaburi and Narathiwat. Among the 17 newly eligible business are rubber-product manufacturers, traditional Thai medicine firms, and renewable energy generators.

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VIETNAM: Nation Brand Value Up 11 Per Cent

Việt Nam's national brand value rose by 11 per cent this year, up from US\$388 billion to \$431 billion, thanks to its growing investment attractiveness to foreign manufacturers, according to the leading brand valuation consultancy Brand Finance. Its value gain of \$184 billion over the course of the pandemic was the world's highest gain in relative terms, up 74 per cent against 2019, and the third highest gain in absolute terms. "Việt Nam has gained momentum as an attractive destination for foreign investment thanks to successful fiscal and monetary policies and investments in human capital, but also amid trade disruptions from China's lockdowns and continued tension between Beijing and Washington," said Brand Finance. Việt Nam's national brand value is not a valuation of aggregated Vietnamese commercial brands, but rather, is a valuation of the brand of the country itself. Việt Nam got relatively high scores on agricultural ratings, social media engagement, and the nation's response to COVID-19, which were the three driving forces behind the increased valuation.

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Hà Nội Starts \$55mIn Project on Enhancing Accessibility to Metro Line

A groundbreaking ceremony has been held on Friday morning to mark the start of the project to improve Hà Nội's infrastructure for public transport users. The plan is to build pedestrian subways, bus stops and other physical assets to help metro users get in and out of stations quickly and safely. The project is called "Strengthening Sustainable Urban Transport for Hà Nội Metro Line 3" and is jointly funded by Hà Nội People's Committee and the Asian Development Bank. It will cost US\$54.75 million with \$48.95 million from the ADB and \$5.8 million from the city's budget. The project will develop an integrated public transport system in six districts of Hà Nội that will

support Hà Nội Metro Line 3. Improved public transport will facilitate connectivity and enhance access in the capital as well as support the Hà Nội Urban Transport Master Plan (HUTMP) objective of increasing ridership on public transport to over 40 per cent, reducing dependency on vehicle ownership. It will also support Hà Nội's climate change mitigation efforts in adopting a low-carbon transport growth path, which is more energy efficient and lowers GHG emissions.

The project will provide infrastructure for improving accessibility to Metro Line 3 stations, implement feeder bus links, a public transport management system, integrated multi-modal stations with "park and ride" facilities, as well as a comprehensive parking plan for the city. Public transport services and other facilities will be designed to incorporate gender-sensitive features that will complement similar measures under the Metro Line 3 project. In addition, any policy and regulatory measures developed will be fully inclusive. Nguyễn Chí Cường, director of the Hà Nội Traffic Construction Investment Project Management Board, said that the project spanned six districts, namely Nam Từ Liêm, Bắc Từ Liêm, Cầu Giấy, Ba Đình, Đống Đa and Hoàn Kiếm. "The contractor must both construct and ensure smooth traffic on this route as it is the main traffic axis to the city centre with large and complicated intersections where congestion usually occurs," he said. "To overcome difficulties, the Project Management Board will coordinate with the construction unit, the supervision consultant and the design consultant to develop a detailed and specific implementation plan, and carefully study traffic flows to make reasonable traffic adjustments."

Vice Chairman of the Hà Nội People's Committee Dương Đức Tuấn said that the project aimed to increase the efficiency of urban railway No. 3 when it is put into operation. "The implementation of investment and construction projects is very necessary," he said, asking for joint efforts and close cooperation among units, departments and agencies. He asked the Department of Planning and Investment and the Department of Finance to closely coordinate with the Ministry of Planning and Investment, the Ministry of Finance and relevant units in balancing and prioritising funding according to the implementation schedule. The Departments of Transport and Communications and the Department of Construction were told to work together to remove difficulties and obstacles for the project management board during the implementation process while ensuring the quality management of construction works in accordance with regulations.

The city police were asked to cooperate with the Department of Transport and the People's Committees of the relevant districts to guide the investor to organise traffic to ensure the safety of people and vehicles, minimising the impact on the daily life of people in the project area. People's Committees of districts involved in the project were urged to hand over the site so that the project contractor can start construction right after the groundbreaking ceremony. Construction contractors, consulting and supervising units must develop specific plans, ensuring the correct implementation of

commitments in the contract signed with the investor, Tuấn said. As of July this year, over VNĐ568 billion (US\$24.3 million) of the project capital has been disbursed, equivalent to 17.2 per cent of the plan.

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An Additional \$3.5 Billion to Be Put into the Economy

VNDirect Securities Corporation estimates that about VNĐ83.5 trillion (US\$3.5 billion) will be added to the economy after some banks continue to adjust their credit growth limits for this year. Four banks, VPBank, HDBank, MB and Vietcombank have just adjusted its credit room for the third time this year. According to VNDirect's data, VPBank has the highest credit growth at this time, adding up to 11.5 per cent, bringing the credit growth for the whole year to 27.2 per cent. This result is higher than VNDirect's previous forecast of 23 per cent and 20.2 per cent higher than last year, followed by HDBank and MB with the limits extended by 5.1 per cent and 5 per cent respectively. It brings the full-year credit growth at these two banks to more than 23 per cent and also higher than VNDirect's previous forecast of 20 per cent. As for Vietcombank, the credit room was added by 0.9 per cent, meaning their full-year credit growth could reach 18.6 per cent. Up to this point, these are the four banks that are granted the highest credit room in the system, while the remaining banks have only 10-15 per cent room for the whole year. Based on VNDirect's calculations for 18 banks, about 80 per cent of system credit, the total credit growth of this group after the adjustment will reach about 13.6 per cent by the end of the year. "This is a move to reallocate credit lines among commercial banks and the State Bank's target of 14 per cent is still maintained," VNDirect said.

At the beginning of September, the State Bank of Việt Nam had an additional adjustment of credit limits for many commercial banks, including the above four banks. The additional credit growth limit ranges from 0.7 - 4 per cent; in which, Sacombank was granted an additional maximum limit of 4 per cent. Representatives of banks said that with the additional credit room, banks would continue to control credit growth in essential sectors and industries of the economy, priority areas of the Government, well control liquidity and credit risk, ensure that bad debt ratio is controlled at a low level. The State Bank of Việt Nam said that the adjustment of the credit room was based on the assessment of the operation of credit institutions in accordance with its regulations, contributing to controlling inflation and stabilises the money market. At the same time, credit institutions are encouraged to improve their business administration, operational safety, and healthy banking system. In response to experts' suggestions about the full-year credit growth target that can be adjusted to 15 - 16 per cent, Nguyễn Thị Hồng, SBV Governor said credit management was a very important tool to focus on controlling inflation this year and next. The State Bank of Việt Nam will continue to maintain its credit growth target of 14 per cent for this year and its consistent policy management is right and won, which is highly

appreciated by international organisations. A report by the SBV's Monetary Forecasting and Statistics Department shows that credit growth has reached 10.96 per cent and credit demand is forecasted to continue to increase in the last months of the year as of September 28.

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Vietnam Raises Caps on Credit Growth for Banks

The State Bank of Vietnam (SBV) has lifted caps on credit growth for some banks to provide more loans to the economy as firms need more capital to boost production at the end of the year, local media reported on Friday. It was projected that over 400 trillion Vietnamese dong (nearly 16.2 billion U.S. dollars) of loans would add to the economy toward the year-end thanks to the expansionary stance, the local newspaper Vietnam News reported. The move marked the first time that the SBV has loosened its credit limits on a whole bunch of banks simultaneously. Fifteen commercial banks were given approval to expand their credit growth limits by between 1 to 4 percentage points. Sacombank had its cap raised by 4 percentage points, the largest one, followed by Agribank (3.5 percentage points), Military Bank (3.2 percentage points) and Saigon-Hanoi Bank (3.2 percentage points). The SBV announced in early September five beneficiaries to be prioritised for the supportive policy, which comprise the agriculture sector, export sector, supporting industries, high-tech industries, and small and medium-sized firms. At a recent meeting with commercial banks, Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh has urged the banking system to meet the capital demand of the economy and control capital flows into high-risk sectors. By late September, total credit to Vietnam's economy topped 11.5 quadrillion Vietnamese dong (465.1 billion U.S. dollars), up 10.8 percent year-on-year.

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ADB Leads \$135 Million Climate Financing Package to Support Electric Mobility in Viet Nam

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) mobilized a \$135 million financing package for VinFast Trading and Production Joint Stock Company (VinFast) for manufacturing Viet Nam's first fully-electric public transport bus fleet and first national electric vehicle (EV) charging network. The assistance will support Viet Nam's efforts to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions and expand high-tech manufacturing industries. The 7-year tenor climate financing comprises a \$20 million loan funded by ADB, parallel loans \$87 million facilitated by ADB as mandated lead arranger, and concessional financing of up to \$28 million. The climate financing is certified by the Climate Bonds Initiative, a scientifically-based standard for labeling bonds, loans, and other debt instruments which contribute to addressing climate change.

ADB has partially offset the project's risks by utilizing concessional financing from its managed trust funds comprising a loan of up to \$20 million from the Australian Climate Finance Partnership funded by the Australian Government (ACFP); a loan of up to \$5 million from the Clean Technology Fund (CTF); and a grant of up to \$3 million from the Climate Innovation and Development Fund, which is funded by Goldman Sachs and Bloomberg Philanthropies. Parallel loans were also mobilized by ADB from Export Finance Australia, the Finnish Fund for Industrial Cooperation, Oesterreichische Entwicklungsbank AG, and ResponsAbility. "This project delivers a high-impact, sustainable transport solution for Viet Nam while helping it meet its climate goals and supporting the growth of climate finance in the region," said ADB Private Sector Operations Department Director General Suzanne Gaboury. "Asia and the Pacific is the frontline of the global fight against climate change, and private sector projects like this one with innovative partners such as VinFast are crucial to help its countries decarbonize their economies."

Viet Nam's transport sector accounts for 18% of the country's annual greenhouse gas emissions, and its decarbonization, through options like e-mobility, will directly impact the country's ambition to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. Additionally, the project includes a technical assistance (TA) of \$950,000 from the ACFP and the CTF, focused on raising consumer awareness about e-mobility's economic, environmental, and social impacts to help advance its market penetration. The TA will also help promote the role of women studying for or working in fields related to science, technology, and mathematics. "We are delighted to receive this extensive support and a long-term financing package from ADB and several esteemed international development finance Institutions. We see this as a vote of confidence in our efforts to become a global smart mobility company that offers environmentally friendly public transportation, and to advance Viet Nam's transition to a low carbon economy," said VinFast's Global CEO Thuy Le

Established in 2017, VinFast is Viet Nam's first domestic car company and e-vehicle manufacturer. VinFast is a subsidiary of Vingroup Joint Stock Company, Viet Nam's largest private enterprise and the largest listed company in Viet Nam. VinFast develops e-cars for the domestic and international markets and is investing in a nationwide network of fast-charging units to support its e-vehicle expansion in Viet Nam.

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Vietnam Raises Interest Rate Ceiling to Curb Inflation Risks

The State Bank of Vietnam (SBV) revised up several interest rates from Tuesday, as part of an effort to curb inflation risks, stabilize the foreign exchange market and protect its banking system. The refinancing rate will be increased from 5 to 6 percent,

the discount rate from 3.5 to 4.5 percent, and the overnight inter-banking lending rate from 6 to 7 percent, the bank said in a statement. With the second increase in a month, the bank raised the ceiling of deposit interest rates, with terms from one month to below six months, by one percentage point to 6 percent a year. For demand deposits and deposits with a term below one month, the interest rate ceiling is raised from 0.5 to 1 percent a year. The SBV said the global inflation level remains high and the U.S. Federal Reserve had raised its rates five times recently, with more hikes expected this year and in 2023. "This, coupled with the strengthening of the U.S. dollar, has put pressure on domestic interest rates and exchange rates," the bank said in a statement late Monday.

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South Asia

Bangladesh: ADB Approves \$250 Million for Climate Resilience for Coastal Towns

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) today approved \$250 million in financing to strengthen climate and disaster resilience in 22 coastal towns in Bangladesh. "Bangladesh's coastal towns are exposed to a range of climate and disaster risks, which are expected to increase with climate change. ADB's assistance supports the government's Delta Plan 2100 and Eighth Five-Year Plan to address climate risks in order to steer urban development in resilient directions, and help the country achieve its commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals," said ADB Senior Urban Development Specialist for South Asia Laxmi Sharma. "This project will improve climate and disaster resilience in 22 coastal towns by enhancing municipal infrastructure and services that are critical for resilience building, strengthening adaptive capacities, and raising awareness."

The ADB financing includes \$246 million in regular and concessional loans and a \$4 million grant from the Asian Development Fund. The Government of Bangladesh will contribute \$60 million. The project will develop infrastructure for building climate resilience in coastal towns, including infrastructure to improve urban flood risk management such as stormwater drainage, nature-based solutions, water body restoration, and integrated waste management. Cyclone shelters with early warning systems will be established, taking into account the needs of the elderly, women, children, and persons with disabilities. Bridges, culverts, and roads with stormwater drainage will be constructed and rehabilitated. A comprehensive set of interventions in six project towns will be implemented to help vulnerable households, especially poor women, cope with climate shocks and develop livelihood resilience. These include climate risk assessment for diversifying livelihoods, household skills and resources mapping, enterprise and employment matching, and provision of livelihood training.

The project will strengthen the knowledge and capacity of the Local Government Engineering Department and the project towns in managing climate and disaster resilience. They will be trained on nature-based and green solutions, gender equality and social inclusion-responsive climate and disaster risk sensitive master planning, and information technology-based remote monitoring to inform risk-based urban development plans and develop mitigation measures. The project will also enhance public awareness to prepare for future emergencies and crises.

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BHUTAN: ADB Lends \$37 Million for Fiscal Sustainability, Green Recovery

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$37.35 million policy-based loan to support Bhutan's green and resilient economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The budget support will fund the first subprogram of the Fiscal Sustainability and Green Recovery Program, which supports medium-term institutional and policy reforms to expand domestic resource mobilization; promote private sector development, especially cottage and small industries (CSIs); and introduce climate change adaptation and mitigation measures. "The COVID-19 pandemic severely affected Bhutan's economy, which had been performing well in the past 2 decades. Fiscal sustainability is critical to Bhutan as it recovers from the pandemic and aspires to become a high-income country by 2030," said ADB Public Management Economist for South Asia Chandan Sapkota. "Through the program, government revenue will increase and expand the fiscal space for investments needed to achieve green, resilient, and inclusive development." Nearly 40% of economic activities in Bhutan, which rely heavily on hydropower to drive growth, are susceptible to climate change. The program will help lay Bhutan's foundation for green recovery by supporting national adaptation plan, climate-resilient development strategy, and green finance.

The program will also help strengthen domestic resource mobilization, particularly through reforms in the areas of customs administration, tourism, a medium-term revenue strategy, and public financial management. Business development in Bhutan is constrained by complicated processes, shortage of skilled workforce, low digitalization, reliance on state-owned enterprises, and limited access to finance. The program will support a range of reforms, including the streamlining of licensing procedures, promotion of business ventures, fiscal incentives for cottage and small industries, and market-responsive technical and vocational education and training. A \$1 million technical assistance has also been provided to support the implementation of policy actions, including the strengthening of executing and implementing agencies.

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SRI LANKA: Central Bank Maintains Policy Interest Rates

The Monetary Board of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, at its meeting held on 05 October 2022, decided to maintain the Standing Deposit Facility Rate (SDFR) and the Standing Lending Facility Rate (SLFR) of the Central Bank at their current levels of 14.50 per cent and 15.50 per cent, respectively. In arriving at this decision, the Board considered the latest macroeconomic conditions, expected developments and macroeconomic projections. The Board noted the tight monetary conditions prevailing at present, the decelerating pace of inflation, and the envisaged disinflation path in the near term supported by both domestic and global factors. The Board was of the view that the monetary conditions remain sufficiently tight to achieve the envisaged disinflation path in the period ahead. The contractionary fiscal policies would complement the effects of tight monetary policy measures already in place, helping to mitigate any build-up of aggregate demand pressures, thereby anchoring inflation expectations and bringing down headline inflation to the targeted level of 4-6 per cent over the medium term. Domestic economic activity is expected to remain subdued during 2022, before recovering in 2023. As per the GDP estimates published by the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS), the real economy is estimated to have contracted by 4.8 per cent in the first half of 2022, on a year-on-year basis. The economy is expected to contract in the second half of 2022 as well, impacted by tighter monetary and fiscal conditions, along with the continuation of supply-side constraints and uncertainty surrounding the business environment amidst shortages of foreign exchange in the domestic foreign exchange market, among others.

However, a recovery in economic activity is expected in 2023 with the envisaged improvements in the supply-side, along with the timely implementation of the required reforms. Economic Research Department 06.10.2022 2 Private sector credit continues to contract due to tight monetary and liquidity conditions. Market interest rates are continuously adjusting upwards reflecting the tight liquidity conditions in the domestic money market and the further passthrough of significant monetary policy tightening measures introduced thus far by the Central Bank. With relatively high deposit interest rates offered by licensed banks, a return of currency in circulation to the banking system is also observed. In August 2022, outstanding credit extended to the private sector by commercial banks contracted for the third consecutive month in absolute terms, reflecting the impact of increased effective market lending interest rates, a moderation of economic activity, and measures to curtail non-urgent imports.

Accordingly, the current declining trend in the year-on-year growth of credit to the private sector is expected to continue during the remainder of the year, while a similar trend is expected in the growth of broad money (M2b) supply as well. Meanwhile, the need for further monetary financing is expected to reduce gradually,

supported by the envisaged fiscal consolidation measures and planned reforms of major state owned business enterprises. Headline inflation is expected to follow a disinflationary path in the near term. Headline inflation, based on the Colombo Consumer Price Index (CCPI), edged up in September 2022, driven mainly by the recent revision of electricity and water tariffs and the increase in Value Added Tax (VAT). However, headline inflation is expected to follow a disinflation path in the period ahead. Subdued aggregate demand pressures resulting from tight monetary and fiscal conditions, expected improvements in domestic supply conditions, normalisation in global food and other commodity prices, and the timely passthrough of such reductions to domestic prices, along with the favourable statistical base effect, will be instrumental in bringing down inflation over the medium term.

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Sri Lanka Cabinet Approves Downgrade Back to Low Income Country

Cabinet has approved a proposal to downgrade Sri Lanka to “low income” category on the World Bank list with the aim of getting access to concessional funding from international organizations. “International organizations had informed the Finance Minister to downgrade Sri Lanka back to the lower income category as access to concessional funding would be easier,” Cabinet Spokesman Minister Bandula Gunawardane said.

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PAKISTAN: \$1.5 Billion ADB Financing to Promote Social Protection, Food Security

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved \$1.5 billion in financing to help the Government of Pakistan provide social protection, promote food security, and support employment for its people amid devastating floods and global supply chain disruptions. The loan, provided under ADB’s Building Resilience with Active Countercyclical Expenditures (BRACE) Program, will help fund the government’s \$2.3 billion countercyclical development expenditure program designed to cushion the impacts of external shocks, including the Russian invasion of Ukraine. “Pakistan’s recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic has been impeded by external shocks,” said ADB Director General for Central and West Asia Yevgeniy Zhukov. “Increasing business costs and rising living expenses are affecting millions of Pakistanis, especially the poor and vulnerable. ADB’s program will help the government manage the impacts of high prices, increasing food insecurity, slowing business activity, and reducing income for vulnerable groups, many of whom are also reeling from the devastating floods.”

ADB's financing will provide the fiscal space needed for the government to implement its countercyclical development expenditure package, which is designed to target the poorest families in Pakistan who are often disproportionately affected in times of crisis. The government's support includes specific measures to promote gender empowerment and climate change adaptation, which have become even more important in light of the recent floods. ADB's assistance will help to expand the number of families receiving cash transfers from 7.9 million to 9 million, increase the number of children enrolled in primary and secondary schools, and enhance geographic coverage of health services and nutritional supplies for pregnant and lactating mothers and children under 2 years old. "The program is part of a comprehensive and well-coordinated package of support. It will help the government deal with the impact of the immediate shocks to the economy, while, in parallel, continue the structural reforms that are necessary to improve the country's medium- to long-term macroeconomic prospects," said ADB Director for Public Management, Financial Sector, and Trade Tariq Niazi. "We are working closely with the International Monetary Fund and other development partners to ensure that our support through policy dialogue, technical assistance, and program lending is well-coordinated and that, ultimately, we are able to help the government improve Pakistan's resilience to shocks."

ADB's \$1.5 billion countercyclical support is part of a significant response package to support people, livelihoods, and infrastructure in Pakistan in the wake of the recent floods which have affected over 33 million people and caused extensive damage to infrastructure and agriculture. Pakistan was a founding member of ADB. Since 1966, ADB has committed over \$37 billion in loans, grants, and other forms of financing to promote inclusive economic growth in Pakistan and improve the country's infrastructure, energy and food security, transport networks, and social services.

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Central-West Asia

AZERBAIJAN: Unibank Plans to Transform Traditional Banking into Digital

A total of 420,000 households in Azerbaijan will be connected to the high-speed Internet network based on Gigabit Passive Optical Network (GPON) technology by the end of 2024, Deputy Minister of Digital Development and Transport of Azerbaijan Rovshan Rustamov said during a meeting on the use of radio frequencies, Trend reports. "A total of 370,000 households connected to high-speed internet base on GPON technology by the end of 2021. It's planned to provide 420,000 households with GPON technology internet by the end of 2024 and increase the minimum average Internet speed to 25 Mbps," he said. According to Rustamov, reliable, fast, affordable internet network is the way to build an innovative society and digital

economy in Azerbaijan. GPON technology is provided over fiber optic lines. This technology has such advantages as the connection speed provided by this technology provides internet speed up to 100 Mbps, uninterrupted communication and no connection to telephone line.

From <https://en.trend.az> 10/07/2022

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Azerbaijan Reveals State Budget Surplus

Surplus in the state budget of Azerbaijan amounted to 1.9 billion manat (\$1.1 billion) from January through September 2022, Trend reports citing Azerbaijan's Finance Ministry. According to the ministry, the revenues of Azerbaijani state budget exceeded 22.4 billion manat (\$13.1 billion) from January through September 2022, which is 25.3 percent more than in the same period last year. In turn, the state budget expenditures reached 20.47 billion manat (\$12 billion) for the nine months of 2022 or by 97.3 percent of the projected amount, which is 15.6 percent, or 2.7 billion manat (\$1.5 billion) more than in the same period last year.

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Azerbaijani Central Bank Intends to Annually Increase Payments by National Payment Systems

The Central Bank of Azerbaijan (CBA) intends to increase the share of cashless payments in the total turnover to 55 percent by 2022-2026, Executive Director at the CBA Farid Osmanov told Trend. According to him, within Azerbaijan's Socio-Economic Development Strategy for 2022-2026, both in the banking and insurance sectors, capital market, digital transformation and the payment ecosystem, the CBA intends to implement projects aimed at further strengthening, expanding and increasing digital payments and opportunities in the country. "As part of the implementation of these initiatives, two priority areas have been identified: financial stability and financial inclusiveness. In order to ensure financial stability, we can talk about projects aimed at strengthening the security of making payments through national payment systems and international standardization. So, Central Bank aims to annually increase payments by national payment systems by five percent. In the field of expanding financial inclusiveness, the Central Bank is taking measures to increase its share of cashless payments. CBA intends to increase its share of cashless payments in total turnover by 55 percent by 2026," Osmanov said.

He noted that Central Bank is implementing a number of measures in order to accelerate digital transformation in the financial market, expand financial inclusiveness as well as provide banking services for clients on digital platforms and ensure access to financial services. "Thus, for example, as part of digital payments for 2021-2023 strategy, the CBA is working in five following directions: expanding

digital payment solutions, supporting and simplifying the procedure for entering the financial technology market, establishing a risk-based control procedure and appropriate framework, expanding financial inclusiveness in particular, minimizing the difference between cities and regions and stimulating the adoption of payment decisions," Osmanov said. "In addition, the CBA is implementing a project aimed at simplifying the implementation of instant payments (Ani Pay). From this point of view, the bank is working to inform the population and business from January through September 2022, payments through the Ani Pay system increased by 2.2 times, and the number of transactions - by 3.4 times compared to the same period in 2021," he stated.

"Along with this, Central Bank wants banking processes to comply with international standards, and for this purpose, work is underway to implement the ISO 222 standard. I note that most of the information components of the national payment system of Azerbaijan have been brought into line with this standard. CBA believes that these works will be fully completed by the end of 2022 - the beginning of 2023. The introduction of this standard will allow us to simplify the automation of payment processes and increase the efficiency of reports," Osmanov informed. "Here it's about the introduction of Open Banking in the country. The Central Bank, with the support of an international financial corporation, prepared a roadmap for 2021. This roadmap provides for the implementation of various activities in the period 2021-2025. Implementation of Open Banking will simplify entry into the market for fintech companies, ensure the availability of financial services, simplify integration with banks and provide a number of other benefits. I want to note that the preparation of relevant standards is being prepared by CBA. In particular, the bank is coordinating in this direction with the Bank Association and the Financial Technology Association," he said.

In addition, according to Osmanov, the Central Bank of Azerbaijan (CBA) carries out work on the development of digital manat [country's national currency] in cooperation with international think tanks, financial organizations, and banks. "Central Bank works with International Monetary Fund. Step-by-step work is underway to form the concept of digital currency. CBA is also conducting research to assess possible risks. I want to emphasize that these processes require a long period of time. Despite this, CBA continues cooperating and studying international experience and global concepts of digital currency," he stated. Speaking on mechanisms for supporting and controlling the ecosystem of online payments, he said that the adoption of the law 'On payment systems and services' will determine the mechanisms in this area. "CBA prepared and agreed upon the bill 'On payment systems and services' with the relevant state bodies and submitted it to the Azerbaijani government. During the preparation of this bill, the focus was made on international practice and leading technologies. Besides, the bill was formed on the basis of the directive on payment services and systems of the EU.

I want to note that with the adoption of this bill, consumer protection mechanisms will be defined in the payments ecosystem and at the same time, a legal framework will be created to control the activities of organizations and operators of payment systems, as well as third-party service providers (which give information about accounts and intermediary services on payment transactions)," Osmanov said. "This bill will enable us to create enhanced user authentication mechanisms. The bill also covers control measures for 'Open Banking'. Measures of a special control regime will also be reflected in the law. This is about tools for supporting and monitoring fin-tech organizations, start-up projects and other players," he added. "The bill also reflects issues regulating the activities of financial organizations, issues of ensuring safe and reliable payment systems and their efficient operation. It also reflects the rights of a paying agent (a legal entity or an individual entrepreneur engaged in accepting payments from individuals).

Thus, the paying agent will receive the authority to legally carry out intermediary services, that is, payment transactions on behalf of banks, non-banking organizations and other financial institutions. The formation of a legislative framework for monitoring and controlling the activities of financial players will increase financial inclusiveness in Azerbaijan," Osmanov informed. He noted that Azerbaijan is open to new financial and financial technology companies. "CBA is in constant communication with PayPal and Samsung Pay. I would like to note that the current legislation of Azerbaijan does not prevent foreign financial organizations from entering the market. The decision to enter any foreign organization on the market is made directly by these organizations themselves in accordance with their strategy and business plans," Osmanov stressed. He also informed that specialists of CBA and international financial corporations are preparing strategic programs on cybersecurity. "During its preparation, international practice was taken as the basis. It's not only about the technical strengthening of the infrastructure, but it's also planned to conduct educational activities aimed at increasing knowledge. Besides, in order to form a clearer program, the regulator conducts appropriate surveys and assesses the activities of financial market players. In the near future time, we'll be able to approve this program," Osmanov concluded.

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Azerbaijani Finance Ministry Auctions Public Bonds

The Baku Stock Exchange (BSE) held an auction on the placement of public bonds of Azerbaijan's Finance Ministry with a circulation period of 1,092 days, Trend reports on October 26 via the BSE. According to the exchange, 19 investors submitted 31 bids in the price range from 93.7728 manat or \$55.16 (7.9994 percent) to 97.7349 manat or \$57.49 (6.4505 percent) during the auction. In accordance with the decision of the Ministry of Finance, the cut-off price of public bonds was set at 94.2731 manat or \$55.45 (7.9994 percent), and the average weighted price - 95.0619 manat or

\$55.92 (7.4867 percent). The total amount of bids at nominal prices amounted to 109.65 million manat (\$64.5 million), while the placement volume totaled 45,000 manat (\$26,470). The maturity date of the bonds is June 24, 2025.

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Azerbaijan Seeking to Create Financial Model to Improve Passenger Transportation

The issues of improving the organization of passenger service are analyzed in detail in Azerbaijan, Deputy Minister of Digital Development and Transport Rahman Hummatov said on October 27 at a meeting to discuss issues of the transport sector with experts and members of the public council under the ministry in Baku, Trend reports. According to Hummatov, in this regard, the possibilities of building a sustainable financial model, and creating a more efficient management system using a cashless payment system are also being studied.

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Azerbaijan Launches Updated Version of Payment Authorization

The updated version of 3D Secure payment authorization has been launched since October 2022, Head of the payment systems department at Azerbaijani Central Bank (CBA) Kamala Gurbanova said during a press conference, Trend reports citing CBA. According to her, this version of payment confirmation is modernized and is more secure. "The updated method of confirming payments has already been integrated by all banks of Azerbaijan. From the CBA side, all the necessary work is underway to ensure the security of payments," Gurbanova said. In turn, Chairman of the Central Bank Taleh Kazimov, commenting on this issue, stressed that the growth of cyber attacks in the world obliges the financial sector to provide even greater security for making payments.

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Azerbaijani Central Bank Aims at Maximum Reduction of Inflation

The Central Bank of Azerbaijan is aimed at maximum reduction of inflation in the country, Board Chairman of the CBA Taleh Kazimov said at a press conference, Trend reports citing CBA. According to him, after the raising of the discount rate, the bank's analysts observe positive changes in the market. "The change in discount rate in one direction or another has a real impact on inflation. When the corridor that CBA sets is reached, the discount rate will be changed in the direction of revitalizing the financial market, rather than containing it," Kazimov added.

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Azerbaijani Central Bank Raises Discount Rate

The Central Bank of Azerbaijan (CBA) adopted the decision to raise the discount rate by 0.25 percent, up to eight percent, Trend reports citing CBA. According to the Central Bank, the upper limit of the interest corridor remained at the level of 9.25 percent, while the lower limit was raised by one percent up to five percent. The next decision on the parameters of the interest corridor will be revealed on December 16.

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Azerbaijan's Strategic Currency Reserves Increase

Azerbaijan's strategic currency reserves increased by 3.5 percent and amounted to \$55.1 billion since the beginning of 2022, Chairman of the Central Bank of Azerbaijan (CBA) Taleh Kazimov said during a press conference, Trend reports citing CBA. "In addition, the foreign currency reserves of CBA increased by 8.4 percent from January through September 2022 - up to \$7.7 billion," he said. The Central Bank of Azerbaijan (CBA) adopted the decision to raise the discount rate by 0.25 percent, up to eight percent on October 28. The upper limit of the interest corridor remained at the level of 9.25 percent, while the lower limit was raised by one percent up to five percent.

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Need for Projects with Greater Capital Intensity Arises with Development of Economy

As the economy develops, the need for projects with greater capital intensity arises, Minister of Economy of Azerbaijan Mikayil Jabbarov said during a discussion of the draft law "On public-private partnership" at the meeting of the Azerbaijani Parliament's (Milli Majlis) Committee on Economic Policy, Industry, and Entrepreneurship, Trend reports on October 28. He noted that adopting this draft law will allow attracting both external and internal private investments. "The state will be able to do more with less capital and focus on improving legislation, better-ensuring consumer rights and other areas. When developing the law, the international experience was taken into account," Jabbarov said. Reklamınızı SmartBee ilə effektiv edin. He added that the draft law doesn't cover the oil and gas industry, production of electricity, or renewable energy sources because these fields are regulated by separate laws.

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KAZAKHSTAN: Average Monthly Inflation Rate Began to Accelerate - National Bank

The growth rate of monthly inflation in Kazakhstan despite the decline from the peak after the shock value in March of this year, began to accelerate, significantly exceeding the average annual values, Governor at National Bank of Kazakhstan Galymzhan Pirmatov said during a government meeting, Trend reports citing government. The largest price increase over the past two months was observed in housing rent, both amid the full-scale offline start of the school year, and an influx of people from a neighboring country after the announced partial mobilization, as well as for education services and stationery. In annual terms, the inflation reached 17.7 percent. At the same time, the largest contribution continues to be made by rising food prices. Thus, food inflation accelerated to, non-food - to 17 percent. Inflation for paid services reached 12.3 percent. According to him, the sustainability of high inflationary processes amid fiscal stimulus and increased demand in the economy, including taking into account new external shocks that support high inflationary expectations, requires further tightening of monetary policy.

From <https://en.trend.az> 10/17/2022

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National Bank Reveals Forecast for Inflation in Kazakhstan

Inflation in Kazakhstan reached 17.7 percent in annual terms, Chairman of National Bank of Kazakhstan (NBK) Galymzhan Pirmatov said during the plenary meeting of Kazakh Parliament on the issue 'On republican budget for 2023-2025', Trend reports. According to him, amid the global trend of rising prices for food and raw materials, reinforced by imbalances in domestic markets and changes in logistics and production chains, inflation has also increased in Kazakhstan. "Inflation reached 17.7 percent in annual terms. The largest contribution continues to be made by the growth in food prices, which reached 22.2 percent in annual terms. Non-food inflation also accelerated to 17 percent due to the continuing rise in the cost of imported goods and supported by demand for them. The inflation of paid services reached 12.3 percent," Pirmatov said. According to him, inflation will exceed the August forecast by the end of 2022, taking into account the external shocks of September this year. "The inflation will gradually slow down to 7.5-9.5 percent amid the ongoing monetary policy in 2023. Inflation will also be constrained by slower growth in food prices in the world, slower inflation in trading partner countries," Pirmatov said.

From <https://en.trend.az> 10/25/2022

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TAJKISTAN: \$50 Million ADB Grant to Support Food Security, Social Protection, and Business

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$50 million grant to help the

Government of Tajikistan mitigate the adverse economic and social impacts of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. ADB's Building Resilience with Active Countercyclical Expenditures (BRACE) Program will help finance the government's anti-crisis action plan, which aims to expand social assistance for poor and vulnerable people, support domestic food production, safeguard small businesses, and support employment for returning migrants. "As a relatively small, open, oil-importing economy, Tajikistan has been hard hit by consequences of the war," said ADB Director General for Central and West Asia Yevgeniy Zhukov. "ADB's support will help mitigate the impact of rising food and oil prices and diminishing remittances, which are slowing growth and pushing up unemployment and poverty." With ADB's support, 250,000 poor and vulnerable households will benefit from one-time cash transfers of 600 Somoni (\$59) per household.

"Food security measures supported by the program will help small-scale farmers increase production," said ADB Principal Financial Sector Specialist Syed Ali-Mumtaz H. Shah. "The government will also procure and stockpile food to ensure adequate supply of agricultural and food products." To support business and employment, returning migrants will obtain vocational training for reskilling. "The program will provide concessional loans through two state-owned banks for small and medium-sized enterprises engaged in agriculture, services, and trade sectors," said ADB Senior Economist Muhammadi Boboev. "This will support crisis-affected businesses, including those owned by women, to help them recover and also maintain employment." The grant is funded by the Asian Development Fund, which provides grants to ADB's poorest and most vulnerable developing member countries. ADB will also provide \$400,000 in technical assistance to enhance the government's capacity to implement the program and strengthen its monitoring and evaluation system. Since Tajikistan joined ADB in 1998, the bank has become the country's largest multilateral development partner with over \$2.5 billion in assistance, including over \$1.8 billion in grants. ADB's 2021–2025 country partnership strategy for Tajikistan focuses on three strategic priorities: structural reforms to enhance resource allocation and mobilization, improving labor productivity through human capital development, and fostering better livelihoods by investing in the land-linked economy.

From <https://www.adb.org/> 10/21/2022

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TURKMENISTAN: Revealing Indicators on Non-Cash Payments Through Terminals and ATMs

The total volume of non-cash payments via terminals from January through August 2022 amounted to 8.4 billion Turkmen manats (\$2.39 billion) in Turkmenistan, Trend reports citing the Business Turkmenistan news agency. During the specified period, the total amount of non-cash payments through ATMs amounted to 171.6 million Turkmen manats (\$48.9 million). Non-cash turnover on bank cards from January

through August 2022 amounted to 9.02 billion Turkmen manats (\$2.57 billion). Furthermore, at the beginning of December last year, during a meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan, a Program for 2022 on the sustainable development of the national economy was adopted. In general, the country's financial sector is constantly expanding. In particular, mobile applications are being introduced to pay for various services and goods, the number of non-cash payments is increasing, and payment for goods and services is being implemented through bank terminals.

From <https://en.trend.az> 10/27/2022

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Turkmenistan Discloses Volume of Loans Issued to Economic Entities

The volume of loans issued by credit institutions of Turkmenistan to enterprises, organizations, and citizens from January through September 2022 amounted to 84.96 billion Turkmen manat (\$24.24 billion), which is 13.3 percent more than in the reporting period 2021 (74.96 billion Turkmen manat - \$21.39 billion), Trend reports citing Business Turkmenistan news agency. The total amount of loans issued to citizens engaged in entrepreneurial activity without the formation of a legal entity amounted to 17.83 billion Turkmen manat (\$5.08 billion) as of the beginning of September 2022, which is 23.6 percent more than in the same period of 2021 (14.42 billion Turkmen manat or \$4.11 billion). Furthermore, at the beginning of December last year, during a meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan, a Program for 2022 on the sustainable development of the national economy was adopted. In general, the country's financial sector is constantly expanding. In particular, mobile applications are being introduced to pay for various services and goods, the number of non-cash payments is increasing, and payment for goods and services is being implemented through bank terminals.

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Oceania

AUSTRALIA: \$110 Million to Unlock Investment in Regional NSW

The NSW Government will invest \$110 million to activate new and emerging industries, drive high value jobs and help the regions reach their economic potential. Deputy Premier and Minister for Regional NSW Paul Toole said the Regional Investment Activation Fund was aimed at making regional NSW the location of choice for private sector investment. "Our Government has a big, bold vision for regional NSW – and this fund is about helping bring that vision to life," Mr Toole said. "We're putting more than \$100 million on the table to co-invest in game-changing projects that turbocharge priority industries or locations in the regions. "It will be open to expressions of interest from investors across Australia and around the world

interested in expanding or setting up in regional NSW.” Mr Toole said the fund would help activate the economic potential of the State’s Special Activation Precincts, Regional Job Precincts and other priority locations.

“The NSW Government’s unprecedented investment is making regional NSW the location of choice for investors both here and around the world,” Mr Toole said. “This fund will help support new and emerging industries where regional NSW has a competitive edge and put our communities in the box seat for the future.” The Regional Investment Activation Fund will co-invest with eligible businesses in projects that aim to deliver, significant economic, social and/or environmental benefits for a priority industry or location. Projects must be based in regional NSW, support sustainable employment opportunities and be completed by 30 May 2025.

From <https://afndaily.com.au> 10/06/2022

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NSW Government Rules Out Methane Tax on Agriculture

The NSW Government today promised to support – not tax – farmers to reduce emissions and grow their businesses, ruling out imposing a methane tax on agriculture. Deputy Premier Paul Toole said a proposal by the New Zealand Government to tax farmers for agriculture emissions from 2025 would only drive up farmers’ costs without giving them the necessary support to genuinely reduce emissions. “We have a clear policy to partner with farmers to improve their productivity while reducing emissions – New Zealand Labour’s policy is the complete opposite, and has raised fears it will shrink their livestock industry and drive up the cost of food,” Mr Toole said. “Our Government has worked hard to shift the emphasis from regulation to incentive-based outcomes, putting us on track to halve our emissions while attracting up to \$37 billion in private investment by 2030.

“We call on NSW Labor to provide certainty to farmers and consumers that they will never introduce an agricultural methane tax like this.” Minister for Agriculture Dugald Saunders said the NSW Government is already working with the agriculture industry to reduce emissions in a way that doesn’t involve a great big new tax – and instead rewards farmers for actions that help drive down emissions. “The NSW Government has introduced a range of measures to assist farmers to tackle climate change, as we head towards our target of net zero by 2050,” Mr Saunders said. “We have the Primary Industries and Productivity Abatement Program, Biodiversity Credits Supply Fund and we are working on a range of new programs through our Natural Capital program.

“We are also collaborating with Angus Australia, the University of New England and Meat and Livestock Australia on a \$19 million research project that aims to identify cattle that have a low methane output through breeding values. “These sorts of programs will make a real difference to improving our climate and reducing emission,

demonstrating you don't need a great big new tax to reduce on-farm emissions.” Angus Australia CEO Scott Wright said the announcement was welcome news for NSW beef producers. “Additional taxes on beef producers are not a solution to the problem,” Mr Wright said. “Collaborative research to help producers adopt breeding values with regards to lower methane emissions is a real solution. Angus Australia values the long-standing relationship with NSW DPI and welcomes the sensible approach taken by the NSW Government today.”

From <https://afndaily.com.au> 10/14/2022

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\$11.5 Million to Get Local Housing Moving

The NSW Government is backing councils with funding and resources to move a backlog of planning proposals and development applications (DAs), and deliver more local housing. NSW Premier Dominic Perrottet said the \$11.5 million Unblocking Homes Program will provide targeted support, to help fast-track the delivery of tens of thousands of homes currently stuck in the system. “We’re building on our \$2.8 billion 2022 Housing Package announced in this year’s Budget, with targeted help for councils to drive more local housing delivery,” Mr Perrottet said. “It’s timely support which will provide more opportunity and certainty for first home buyers, under-resourced councils and for the construction industry.” Deputy Premier and Minister for Regional NSW Paul Toole said the support includes a new Regional Housing Flying Squad which would help regional councils clear development applications faster and speed up the delivery of new homes.

“We know there’s a shortage of qualified planners in some parts of the State. This is about overcoming that with a flying squad of experts who can help councils review development applications faster and move projects into construction,” Mr Toole said. “We trialled this approach earlier in the year so we know it works. We’re now expanding it to ensure we are making an impact in the communities that need it most.” Minister for Planning and Minister for Homes Anthony Roberts said the Regional Housing Flying Squad is on track to assess more than 2,400 new homes, saving hundreds of hours of council planners’ time. “Councils have done it tough in recent years with skills shortages, bushfires, COVID-19 and floods all contributing to a local planning backlog, and an increase in average assessment times for local DAs from 69 to 85 days between July 2021 and July 2022,” Mr Roberts said.

“We’re here to help with support for complex applications and assessments, freeing up council time and speeding up approvals to get more shovels in the ground sooner.” Minister for Local Government Wendy Tuckerman said, as at 15 September 2022, there were 107 housing rezoning proposals currently under assessment with potential for 87,583 rezoning lots. “There were also nearly 10,000 residential development applications under assessment with the potential to deliver some

82,842 homes,” Ms Tuckerman said. “The Unblocking Homes program will see the NSW Government partner with councils to resolve issues in complex assessments. This will help tackle the backlog and fast-track approvals to deliver more housing more quickly for our growing and diverse population – including social and affordable housing for people in need, Aboriginal communities and seniors.”

From <https://afndaily.com.au> 10/15/2022

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Federal Budget a Cost of Living Failure as Labor Also Strips NSW of Promised Projects

The Federal budget has failed to address the national energy bill crisis while also robbing NSW residents of promised projects and funding. NSW Treasurer Matt Kean said the Federal Labor Government had failed to help the nation’s consumers who are facing bill shock as global forces lash the National Energy Market. “It’s a national problem that requires a national solution. Consumers have been shortchanged,” Mr Kean said. The Federal Budget only delivered \$7.5 billion in cost of living relief across the country, while the 2022/23 NSW Budget delivered \$7.2 billion for NSW alone. “We saw the Albanese government campaign on cost of living and a promise to slash electricity bills; tonight they barely delivered, giving people a sense of what a Labor election promise is worth,” Mr Kean said.

Billions in promised funding has also been stripped from NSW including \$1.7 billion over four years for infrastructure projects including: \$433 million for Dungowan Dam \$75 million for the Wakehurst Parkway “The Federation has long operated on a trust system of sharing funds between the Commonwealth and the states, making our country successful and stable,” Mr Kean said. “Tonight the Commonwealth broke that trust and that system, doing serious damage to the NSW economy and budget. “This means thousands of jobs won’t be created, and vital services and amenities will be put on hold.” Commonwealth health funding projections for NSW have also been revised downwards since the March budget by \$1.1 billion over the four years.

There was also no allocation of funds towards raising the Warragamba dam wall, a safety measure designed to protect the people of Western Sydney. However, NSW welcomes the Commonwealth’s commitment to childcare, housing and climate change. Other key funding for NSW in tonight’s Federal Budget includes: NSW will receive \$2.9 billion for infrastructure in 2022-23, excluding pass through payments, which is \$1.3 billion less than the March Budget. The Budget funds longer-term capital funding commitments including \$500 million for the High Speed Rail Authority in NSW to start corridor acquisition, planning and early works for the Sydney to Newcastle High Speed Rail.

The Commonwealth has provisioned a further \$1.3 billion over the four years for Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements for NSW, relating to the floods which

occurred in the first half of 2022 since the March Budget. \$4.7 billion over four years from 2022-2023 for cheaper childcare. \$531.6 million to expand the Paid Parental Leave Scheme, transitioning from a total 20 weeks in July 2023 to 26 weeks leave by July 2026. \$24.9 billion new climate-related spending measures over 2022-23 to 2029-30 through the Budget, aligning with the NSW Government's priority of boosting investment in energy, climate change and sustainability. \$324.6 million over four years from 2022-23 to establish the Help to Buy scheme to assist people on low to moderate incomes to purchase a new or existing home with an equity contribution from the Government.

From <https://afndaily.com.au> 10/28/2022

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NEW ZEALAND: Government Funds Work to Clean Up Six Contaminated Sites

The Government has announced funding to clean up six contaminated sites to reduce the risk to public health and protect the environment. "These six projects will help protect the public from health risks associated with hazardous materials, so New Zealanders can live in a cleaner, safer environment." Environment Minister David Parker said. The new allocations from the Contaminated Sites Remediation Fund (CSRF) address historical contamination, which in many cases started in the Nineteenth Century. The funds are for projects that relate to: a former landfill in Christchurch a former landfill in Bluff an old gasworks site in Oamaru two former gold mines in Thames/Coromandel a former defence site at Awaroa/Godley Head near Lyttelton Harbour "Through the Contaminated Sites Remediation Fund, we direct support to priority contaminated sites, supporting local government to meet their obligations," David Parker said.

In Opawa, south-east Christchurch, remedial work will be carried out at several homes within the boundaries of a former landfill to protect residents from risk from contaminated soil. Environment Canterbury is leading the remediation and Christchurch City Council is contributing to the project. "The soil capping and management of the properties will enable the residents to use their gardens safely," David Parker said. The fund is also supporting development of a remediation plan for the Ocean Beach Landfill near Bluff in a partnership led by the Department of Conservation, with the support of Environment Southland and Invercargill City Council. "Historic landfills can become a threat to communities and the environment as the effects of climate change and extreme weather events become more pronounced.

This project will take us closer to cleaning up the Ocean Beach Landfill site and stopping further contamination of the surrounding area, both onshore and offshore," David Parker said. The Oamaru Gasworks operated from 1876 to 1980 resulting in soil contamination from waste materials such as coal tars and heavy metals dumped

on the site during its demolition in 1983. The Department of Conservation will be the lead agency in this project, supported by Otago Regional Council with additional co-funding by KiwiRail. In the Thames-Coromandel district, detailed site investigations are being funded to determine the levels of arsenic and cyanide contamination caused by historic gold extraction at the former Tokatea and Victoria Battery Mines. Both are now on Public Conservation Land. The projects will be led by the Department of Conservation in a joint partnership with Waikato Regional Council.

At the Awaroa/Godley Head Reserve near Lyttelton, the Department of Conservation, with support from Environment Canterbury, is working to manage asbestos-contaminated soils around former military buildings to make them safer for the public to visit. "These projects are examples of landowners addressing historical contamination to ensure hazardous waste is removed or managed and the health of the community protected," David Parker said. The \$2.08 million funding from the Contaminated Sites Remediation Fund for the six projects will be bolstered by \$1.55m from project partners, for a total of \$3.63m across the projects.

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 10/02/2022

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More Than 4 Million Cost of Living Payments Made

More than four million Cost of Living payments have now been made to provide timely support for low and middle income New Zealanders and soften the impact of inflation pressures. That number is expected to grow to more than six million payments once the remaining eligible people file their tax returns by the first quarter of 2023. Up-to-date information was released by Inland Revenue today in its final summary report after the third Cost of Living payment on October 3. The total Cost of Living payment of \$350 is being made in three instalments of about \$116. Revenue Minister David Parker said the targeted and meaningful support helped take the hard edges off for Kiwis feeling the pressure of higher prices. "The payment was designed to get the money into people's hands as quickly as possible and the best way to do that was by using the available information held by Inland Revenue to determine eligibility," David Parker said.

"The criteria for eligibility that were agreed by Cabinet have always been absolutely clear and remain the same. They include that a person has to be present in New Zealand to be eligible for the payment." IR had continued to work on refining the screening tests for eligibility to the payment to ensure it went to those intended. "While IRD records are good they are not perfect, so a small percentage of payments went to people who, for instance, were overseas but had a New Zealand address in IR's data sets. "The only alternative – requiring people to apply – would have taken much longer, cost far more in wasted administration than would be saved, and seen many eligible people, who did not apply, miss out because of the extra administrative barrier," David Parker said. IR has estimated that an application-based scheme

would have cost \$30 million to administer – \$14 million more than the administration cost of the scheme put in place.

“As the three payments were rolled out IR has refined its screening tests, leading to a significant drop in payments going to ineligible people, over the course of the three instalments,” David Parker said. “The most significant changes were made between the first and third instalments, after I questioned IR about the tests it was applying and whether further screening tests could be used. The Auditor-General also expressed concerns.” Further information from NZ Customs was made available for use ahead of the third instalment on October 3. (See timeline below.) IR estimates 1.7 per cent of expected payments had been made to recipients who are potentially overseas, and so may not be eligible. “This percentage will fall as some of those recipients subsequently confirm they are in New Zealand and as further information is available from New Zealand Customs,” David Parker said

The amount paid to people who are potentially overseas is \$12.6 million, which is less than the extra cost of an application-based alternative. Some of those assessed as potentially overseas will be eligible, so that figure of \$12.6 million will drop as some confirm they were in New Zealand and therefore were eligible. “If people believe they should receive a payment and don’t get one, they can contact Inland Revenue to confirm they are eligible,” David Parker said.

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 10/07/2022

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Finance Minister to Lead Business Delegation to US

Grant Robertson departs this evening with a business delegation to New York, after which he will travel to Washington DC for meetings. “The New York leg of the trip has been developed by Air New Zealand alongside their new non-stop service from Auckland. It presents an opportunity to continue promoting New Zealand’s Reconnection Strategy and strengthen business ties in the United States,” Grant Robertson said. “It also provides a valuable opportunity to engage with Kiwi business leaders and highlight New Zealand’s tourism offerings on the world stage.” The Finance Minister will attend the World Bank and International Monetary Fund annual meetings in Washington DC. He will also meet with the US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell, senior officials from the Biden administration and Finance Ministers from around the world.

“These meetings provide an opportunity to engage with counterparts on geopolitical issues, including matters relating to New Zealand’s and the Pacific’s economic security, trade, the recovery from COVID-19 and ongoing matters such as supply chain issues, global inflation and Russia’s illegal invasion of Ukraine. “We are all facing an uncertain global economic environment, and I am keen to hear the insights and perspectives of other countries on their approach and to share New Zealand’s

story with them.” “This trip is a great opportunity to reconnect in person with the US Government, international financial institutions, APEC, and our partners in the Asia-Pacific region as we look to reconnect New Zealand to the world and strengthen relationships with our business and trade partners,” Grant Robertson said. The Minister will return to New Zealand on October 18.

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 10/10/2022

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Inflation Eases amid Volatile Global Environment

Inflation has eased slightly in the New Zealand economy amid a volatile international environment that continues to put pressure on prices, meaning the Government’s balanced financial approach to target spending is needed now that the emergency Covid spending is over. Stats NZ today reported that the Consumer Price Index was 2.2 percent in the September quarter, taking the annual inflation rate to 7.2 percent, down from 7.3 percent in the previous quarter. “Inflation is continuing to be heavily influenced by global factors, with the Ukraine war and pandemic related supply constraints affecting fuel and imported food and building material prices,” Grant Robertson said. “Food price rises of 8 percent for the year were not only influenced by global prices but also by severe weather events that affected growing conditions. Vegetable prices in the quarter rose 24 percent.

“The Government will continue to carefully target spending in these highly uncertain times. This is not the time to put that at risk by borrowing for tax cuts that benefit the wealthiest the most, as we have seen recently in the UK. “This is why we aren’t spending the money saved on the deficit last year and tracking a carefully path back to surplus. “Inflation globally is high, with forecasts showing other countries’ consumer prices are yet to peak. Australia is forecast to rise to 7.75 percent by the end of 2022. Inflation is running near 10 percent in the UK, over 9 percent in Europe and over 8 percent in the US. New Zealand is at the lower half of the pack in the 38-nation OECD. “We have taken action to take the sharp edges off cost of living pressures on Kiwis, particularly those on lower incomes. Our temporary and targeted cost of living payment, fuel tax cuts and halved priced public transport fares have helped ease the inflationary effects of the Ukraine war and supply chain disruptions.

“We continue to focus on ensuring that New Zealanders are paying a fair price at the pump and the supermarket checkout. We are also moving to strengthen our energy independence through our climate change investments, including initiatives like the Clean Car Discount to decarbonise our transport fleet. “While the future is still highly uncertain, economists believe we are now past the peak of the cycle. However, inflation is expected to remain elevated for some time compared with what has been experienced in recent times. Demand and supply continue to be out of balance due to ongoing global supply constraints and the Ukraine war, affecting food and imported building material prices. Our reconnection strategy with the rest of world is

attracting the workers we need to help fill vacancies and we have invested in skills development and training for New Zealanders.

“New Zealand cannot escape the global pressures affecting prices at the pump, supermarket and the hardware store but we find ourselves well positioned to respond. Unemployment is at a near record low, the economy is bigger than before COVID, the world wants the goods and services we produce and the Government’s books are among the world’s best, with debt at levels below those of the countries we compare ourselves with,” Grant Robertson said.

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East Asia

CHINA: Automobile Market Continues Rapid Expansion

China's automobile industry maintained rapid growth in September amid the support of policies on stabilizing the economy and boosting consumption, industry data showed Tuesday. The country's automobile sales rose 25.7 percent year on year to 2.61 million units in September, data from the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers showed. China's automobile production topped 2.67 million units last month, up 28.1 percent from the same period of 2021, according to the association. On a monthly basis, China's auto output and sales went up 11.5 percent and 9.5 percent, respectively, in the period. In breakdown, the sales of passenger vehicles in China surged 32.7 percent year on year to top 2.33 million units in September, continuing the sound growth between June and August, the data showed. Thanks to multiple policy support, such as the reduction of purchase tax, China's passenger car sales have returned to normal and showed a rapid growth trend, said the association.

In the same period, the commercial vehicles market also reported continuous recovery, with production and sales up 10.5 percent and 7.9 percent, month on month, respectively. The policy of further reducing expressway tolls for trucks in the fourth quarter is expected to promote the growth of road logistics and ramp up the recovery of the commercial vehicle market, according to the association. Sales of new energy vehicles (NEVs) have remained a bright spot in China's auto market. Last month, the country's NEV sales hit 708,000 units, soaring 93.9 percent over one year earlier. More than 4.56 million NEVs were sold in China in the Jan.-Sept. period, up 110 percent year on year and taking up 23.5 percent of the total share of China's auto market. The country's NEV market will maintain sound performance in the future, said the association, noting that the confidence of enterprises in the field is further enhanced as the country has extended the purchase tax exemption policy for NEVs

to the end of 2023.

In the first nine months, 19.47 million automobiles were sold in China, up 4.4 percent year on year, with a pace 2.7 percentage points faster than the Jan.-Aug. period. Despite the disruptions in the first half of the year, such as the price rise of raw materials and the COVID-19 pandemic, China's policies on stabilizing growth and promoting consumption have effectively supported the automobile industry to overcome difficulties and maintain rapid expansion between June and September, said Chen Shihua with the association. It is expected that China's auto production and sales will continue robust expansion in the fourth quarter as the development environment continues to improve, supported by a raft of policies on stabilizing the economy.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 10/11/2022

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China Opens More Sectors to Foreign Investment

China on Friday issued a new catalog of industries where foreign investment will be encouraged, opening more sectors to foreign investment. The 2022 version of catalog, jointly unveiled by China's National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) and the Ministry of Commerce, will include 1,474 items, with 239 new items added and 167 existing ones modified. The revision is particularly relevant to items related to the manufacturing sector and producer services and aims to optimize the foreign investment layout. The latest version of the national-level sub-catalog will focus more on the high-quality development of the manufacturing sector and technological upgrading. Professional design, technical services and development are among new sectors added to the catalog. More sectors are added to the sub-catalog for central and western regions. The expanded catalog represents a significant step for China to advance high-level opening-up, stabilize foreign investment, and optimize the structure of foreign investment, said an official with the NDRC, adding that it will boost the expectations and confidence of foreign investors. The new catalog will take effect on Jan. 1, 2023.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 10/28/2022

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China's Service Outsourcing Industry Sees Stable Growth

China's service outsourcing industry saw a steady expansion in the first nine months of this year, according to data from the Ministry of Commerce. Chinese firms signed service outsourcing contracts worth about 1.379 trillion yuan (about 192.7 billion U.S. dollars) in the January-September period, up 12.9 percent year on year. The executed contract value came in at 947.1 billion yuan during the period, with a year-on-year increase of 12.6 percent. Of the total, the value of the offshore service

outsourcing contract rose 12.6 percent over the same period of last year to 782.4 billion yuan. In terms of the executed contract value, service outsourcing with the United States, the European Union and members of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership expanded 7.1 percent, 14.1 percent and 8.2 percent year on year, respectively, in the first nine months of 2022. Outsourcing refers to hiring an outside party to carry out services or produce goods typically undertaken by in-house employees.

From <http://www.news.cn/> 10/30/2022

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JAPAN: NTT Data, Denso Start to Build Industry-Wide Ecosystem for EV Batteries

NTT Data Corp and Denso Corp have started to build an industry-wide ecosystem for electric vehicle (EV) batteries to create a global trusted data spaces where only necessary data can be shared, while also protecting private data. The new battery regulation currently being reviewed in Europe will require disclosure of CO2 emissions and the resource recycling rate throughout battery lifecycles to the European Commission. In the future, when Japanese companies sell EVs, including battery electric vehicles (BEVs) and hybrid electric vehicles (HEVs), in the European market, they will be required to meet this regulation in Europe. To make this possible, it is necessary to build a common platform for securely sharing data between suppliers in the value chain, instead of requiring respective companies to meet the regulation individually.

NTT Data and Denso have therefore jointly applied for the solicitation of proposals under the subsidy program of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) to create an industry-wide ecosystem for EV batteries. The two companies were officially approved as business operators in September. In the future, the platform used for the ecosystem is intended to serve as a next-generation information infrastructure, allowing for the secure use of data among companies in different industries, including EV batteries. The two companies will launch a study on a common platform for the automotive and manufacturing industries with the aim of commercializing services by the end of FY2023.

From <https://japantoday.com> 10/16/2022

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Japan to Support Firms Promoting Side Jobs, Job Changes

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida indicated on Tuesday that the government will establish a support system for companies that allow employees to have side jobs or promote job changes. The move is aimed at facilitating labor mobility to achieve "structural wage growth" Kishida advocates. The government will also set up a system to expand subsidies for companies providing ability development training for

employees, the prime minister said at a House of Representatives Budget Committee meeting. On a high-profile sexual harassment case involving a former female member of the Ground Self-Defense Force, Kishida admitted that responses to the case by a GSDF unit she belonged to and by the Defense Ministry were "inappropriate." While referring to allegations that the SDF and the ministry tend to try to cover up scandals, the prime minister vowed efforts to eradicate such harassment.

From <https://www.nippon.com> 10/18/2022

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SOUTH KOREA: CN.AI Leads Emerging Market for AI Synthetic Data Processing

In recent years, artificial intelligence (AI) assisted diagnosis has emerged in many medical fields, such as gastric cancer, one of the leading causes of cancer-related deaths in South Korea, based on endoscopic and other computerized tomographic images. But it is hard to secure enough quality endoscopic images from real clinical cases to run an AI diagnosis program as symptoms of gastric cancer are found in so many different places and forms. Private issues also matter. Lee Won-seop, CEO of CN.AI Inc., a South Korean startup that generates synthetic data for AI, said the artificially manufactured information is the key to solve the data-lacking problem. "Having the right and enough data is the most important and challenging part of building AI," he said in an interview with Yonhap News Agency earlier this week. "My company creates synthetic data based on statistics of the original to help companies collect quality data for their AI engines." Lee, who started his engineering career at Samsung Electronics Co. about 10 years ago, cited his company's project to design an AI-powered gastric cancer diagnosis program with the Samsung Medical Center a year ago.

He had received around 5,000 endoscopic images on 13 divided sections of stomachs, but it was far behind the 200,000 images required for system programming. And some sections had no data at all. To make up for the shortage, his company digitally generated thousands of necessary images of lesions in gastric tissues. "We've collected image data for about one year. We needed images both with cancer and without cancer, and we wanted enough data for each section," explained the 36-year-old. "We filled in the blanks with synthetic data." Synthetic data refers to information that is artificially generated by computer simulations or algorithms as an alternative to real-world data. It has been welcomed by a variety of fields, especially by AI engineering, as collecting quality data from the real world is complicated, expensive and time-consuming. A rise of autonomous vehicles focused a spotlight on the synthetic data industry a few years ago as digitally generated driving scenarios are considered essential to build a safe autonomous driving program.

South Korea also has been experiencing the booming trend, and CN.AI, launched in

2019, was the first mover. It was the only company in the industry when it started operations three years ago, but now there are some five rivals in the country. "We don't only generate synthetic data but also program AI solutions for our clients," Lee said. "Some big companies want just synthetic data, but most want us to design their AI engine using synthetic data." His company posted 1.3 billion won (US\$918,000) in sales in 2020 and 1.4 billion won in 2021. This year, the number is predicted to rise to 1.8 billion won. It had nine business partners last year and has 35 this year, ranging from large companies and government institutions to medical centers. Lee said his company is now eyeing the fast-growing global synthetic data market, which will expand to \$26.1 billion in 2024. "We are planning to go overseas," he said. "We are working on establishing a branch in Silicon Valley and have hired the branch president to attract investors."

From <https://en.yna.co.kr> 10/28/2022

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South-East Asia

CAMBODIA: PM Says Women Entrepreneurs Play Vital Role in ASEAN Economic Growth in Post-Pandemic Era

Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Techo Hun Sen said on Wednesday that women entrepreneurs have played and will continue to play a significant role in helping boost economic growth of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era. Addressing the second ASEAN Women Leaders' Summit in Phnom Penh, which was held in a hybrid format, Hun Sen said women entrepreneurs are a key driving force for sustainable and resilient socio-economic recovery and development toward building a common future and prosperity. He said ASEAN is a region with high economic potential and rapid development, mainly thanks to the active participation of women. "The economies of ASEAN countries depend heavily on micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), led by women," Hun Sen said. "Within the ASEAN framework at present and in the future, women will continue to play a significant role, especially in recovering and boosting sustainable, inclusive and resilient ASEAN economic growth," he added. Hun Sen, whose country is the rotating chair of ASEAN for 2022, said in Cambodia, MSMEs, accounting for 98 percent of the total number of enterprises, contributed around 58 percent to the national economy, and created around 73 percent of total jobs. "Of which, women establish and manage approximately 61 percent of the total number of MSMEs," he said. "The royal government of Cambodia has identified and promoted women as the backbone of national socio-economic development, by increasing investment in gender equality and promoting the role of women in development across sectors, and at all levels." ASEAN groups Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam

From <https://english.news.cn/> 10/12/2022

MYANMAR: To Hold Flower Festival to Revive Pandemic-Hit Tourism Sector

Myanmar will hold an annual flower festival in mid-December to revive the country's pandemic-battered tourism sector, the state-run media reported quoting organizers on Thursday. The annual festival was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021, and this year's event is its 15th edition. The festival, scheduled from Dec. 15 to Jan. 15 next year in Pyin Oo Lwin of central Myanmar's Mandalay Region, will showcase a variety of flowers, the report said. The festival will include many activities such as a festival market selling locally-made products, sweater fabrics, handicrafts and souvenirs, orchid competitions, flower decoration contests, photo contests and entertainment programs. The previous events featured species of flowery plants from abroad, and were participated by floral experts from abroad. The Southeast Asian country resumed the operations of international commercial flights in April, and the number of tourists visiting the country has since increased gradually, official data showed. However, the country's tourism sector as a whole has stagnated over the past two years due to the pandemic.

From <https://english.news.cn/> 10/20/2022

VIETNAM: Electric Vehicle Market Sees Great Potential

The Vietnamese electric vehicle market promises to be more exciting after many years of consumers saying no to hybrid and e-cars, industry insiders said. Experts believe that Vietnamese people have gradually opened their hearts to green cars. In the next few years, when traffic infrastructure and e-vehicle charging stations are widely available, electric vehicles will be chosen by local users. Việt Nam's middle class is growing and live in urban areas while e-vehicles meet the criteria of smart cities, thus people are shifting to green cars that help reduce environmental pollution. According to experts, the electric car segment has begun to diversify with a series of outstanding cars, from popular to luxury. Vietnamese automaker VinFast has entered the e-vehicles market at a "golden time" as sales volume of electric vehicles has begun to increase. VinFast has entered countries where the popularity of e-vehicles is sharply increasing, such as the US, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Canada. The Vietnam Automobile Manufacturers Association (VAMA) reports that the VF e34, the first model developed by Vietnamese automaker VinFast, has seen a sudden sales surge and is ranked 8th in the list of best-selling cars in the Vietnamese market in July 2022.

In June alone, VinFast sold a total of 2,141 vehicles, reflecting a transition from petrol to electric cars. However, it saw sluggish sales in August due to a lack of components. According to a recent report on Việt Nam's electric car market

published by the Vietnam Petroleum Institute, Việt Nam has great potential to develop this segment. If the Government implements supporting policies in a timely manner, Việt Nam can take the lead in electric car development in Southeast Asia. The Vietnam Petroleum Institute reports that Việt Nam's automobile market still shows a lot of room to grow as car ownership remained low at 23 cars per 1,000 people while it is 1 in 10 people in Thailand and 1 in 20 in Malaysia. Việt Nam is a land of great potential with a large population of nearly 100 million people and an undeveloped electric vehicle market. Meanwhile, electric vehicles are becoming a global trend and revenue from the electric vehicle segment is growing at 10 per cent a year, according to car experts. They predict revenue from the electric vehicle market by 2025 will reach about US\$60 billion.

VAMA has also proposed three scenarios for electric vehicles in Việt Nam, with all vehicles being electric by either 2035, 2045 or 2050. According to the International Energy Agency, electric vehicle sales are on course to hit an all-time high this year, but more work is needed in other sectors to put the planet on course for net-zero emissions by 2050. On the EV front, the IEA said global sales doubled in 2021 to represent nearly nine per cent of the car market. Looking forward, 2022 was expected to see another all-time high for electric vehicle sales, lifting them to 13 per cent of total light duty vehicle sales globally. The IEA has previously stated that electric vehicle sales hit 6.6 million in 2021. In the first quarter of 2022, EV sales came to 2 million, a 75 per cent increase compared to the first three months of 2021. Despite the outlook for EVs, the IEA separately noted that they were “not yet a global phenomenon. Sales in developing and emerging countries have been slow due to higher purchase costs and a lack of charging infrastructure availability.” According to the IEA, sustained policy support is the main pillar. Public spending on subsidies and incentives for EVs nearly doubled in 2021 to nearly \$30 billion. A growing number of countries have pledged to phase out internal combustion engines or have ambitious electric vehicle targets for the coming decades.

From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 10/08/2022

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Companies Pay Same Starting Salary for New Graduates from VN and Abroad

For the first time in many years, the starting salary of new graduates from Vietnamese universities and overseas universities is the same (about VNĐ10.6 million, or US\$443.5, per month), according to the Talent-Mercer Total Remuneration Survey (TRS) 2022. This is a good sign as the quality of domestic-trained students is increasingly improving, especially foreign language skills. The TRS also pointed out that high-tech, insurance, and life-science industries have seen the highest salary increases this year, with a rise of 8.8 per cent, 8.2 per cent and 7.6 per cent, respectively. Oil and mining, various manufacturing, and retail industries continue to have the lowest pay growth. The rate of pay growth in the Vietnamese market has

been dropping over time, reaching its lowest point in 2020, however, there have been indications of an upsurge due to the post-COVID economic recovery. Budgets for pay raises in multinational companies increased by 0.2 per cent in 2022 compared to 2021, while Vietnamese businesses experienced a 0.3 per cent decline. Both multinational and local companies are expected to witness similar pay growth trends of 7.1 per cent in 2023.

The percentage of firms with additional staff needs has increased, with 45 per cent of over 600 surveyed organisations reporting that they would hire more employees, 18 per cent of businesses having not decided yet and 35 per cent of businesses having no intentions to hire or dismiss personnel. Only 2 per cent of companies, on the other hand, plan to cut headcount in the coming year. According to Talentnet, many companies are implementing benefits focused on three primary pillars - mental health, physical wellbeing and sustainable development - as a result of COVID, and restructuring the compensation scheme to meet employees' expectations in the new normal. Godelieve Van Dooren, Mercer's CEO for the Southeast Asia Growth Markets, said employees of different genders, ages, and levels have quite diverse needs for their jobs. However, job security is still the top reason that makes them stay. While female personnel are more concerned in wellbeing policies, flexible working hours, men tend to prioritise jobs with competitive salaries, advancement opportunities and professional development, she said.

Advancement opportunities, a pleasant working environment, and career growth will be prioritised by Gen Y employees, whereas Gen X will embrace a competitive compensation, flexible working hours, time off, or health benefits, she added. A total of over 600 multinationals and local companies across 17 industries with more than 483,000 employees took part in the survey, considered the largest in Việt Nam. "Talent attraction and retention has always been a challenge for any business. However, this will constantly shift in response to the economic and social environment. Employees in the new normal expect a more comprehensive and equal policy for them, as well as one that is tailored to their own needs," Nguyễn Thị Thanh Hương, deputy CEO of Talentnet, said. "As a result, the more businesses understand the labour market and regional HR trends to rethink effective yet sustainable compensation practices, the better equipped they will be to develop a more relevant strategy," she said.

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

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Businesses Join Hands with the Government to Realise Poverty Reduction Goals

HDBank donated VNĐ1.2 billion (US\$50,286) for building houses for 20 poor families at an event held to launch the 'Month for the Poor in 2022' in HCM City last week. It underlined the bank's unrelenting support for the poor and contributions to achieving

the government's target of ensuring social security and sustainable development. Launched by the Việt Nam Fatherland Front Committee in HCM City, the campaign from October 17 to November 18 seeks contributions from individuals and organisations to support disadvantaged families, beneficiaries of government policies, poor students, and children orphaned due to COVID-19. The ceremony was attended by representatives of the Central Committee of the Việt Nam Fatherland Front, HCM City leaders, and executives from Petrolimex, HDBank, Nova Group, and others. The meaningful activities planned during the month-long campaign by the Việt Nam Fatherland Front and its member organisations, businesses and individuals affirm their efforts in joining hands with the Government in implementing its sustainable poverty reduction goal.

Also at the event, the committee handed over funds for building and repairing 56 charity houses and ensuring livelihoods for 35 policy beneficiaries living in difficult circumstances and poor and near-poor households, and scholarships to 1,867 students. It also sponsored 65 disadvantaged students in 2022 and 10 children who become orphans due to COVID-19. Đặng Thị Nga, 58, of Gò Vấp District said she was working as a freelancer when her husband died, and she raised her daughter by herself. "When the district announced that I would be given a charity house, I was so happy that I could not sleep thinking I will have a decent place to live in. I am looking forward to the day I receive the house. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to businesses and sponsors." For many years HDBank has been carrying out charity activities all over the country. It recently donated funds to build more than 600 charity houses. It also regularly undertakes programmes such as giving away health insurance cards to tens of thousands of near poor, funding eye surgeries for thousands of poor people, donating water purifiers to provinces suffering from saline intrusion, awarding hundreds of scholarships, and many other meaningful activities. In its 32-year journey of establishment and development, HDBank has always accompanied the community through meaningful voluntary programmes. They are also part of its sustainable development strategy to achieve the Happy Digital Bank objective of being a green and digital bank that works for the happiness of every family.

From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 10/12/2022

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Banking Industry Boosts Digital Transformation

Banking is a particularly important economic sector, playing the role as "lifeline" of the national economy. The industry makes an important contribution to mobilising and allocating financial resources to promote and develop the country's socio-economy, said Trần Tuấn Anh, Politburo member, head of the Central Economic Commission, at a banking summit. The Central Economic Commission and the State Bank of Việt Nam held a high-level summit on Smart Banking 2022 in Hà Nội on Wednesday. The summit on digital transformation aims to solve difficulties

and problems as well as promote the process of exchanging and sharing experiences with international experts in the digital transformation process, thereby providing more recommendations to contribute to the development of the banking industry in the future. The State Bank of Việt Nam and the entire banking industry have actively implemented tasks to participate in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, as well as strong digital transformation in various fields, achieving many positive results. Banking industry is the first industry to announce its digital transformation date (May 11); and issue the Digital Transformation Plan to 2025, with a vision to 2030.

Việt Nam is assessed by Global Management and Consulting Company (McKinsey) as having the fastest digital banking application in the region last year. The experience of fast, efficient and sustainable digital transformation of the banking industry will be useful experience for other sectors and fields in the economy. Deputy Governor of the State Bank of Việt Nam Nguyễn Kim Anh added that this result is reflected in many areas of the banking industry, such as many banking services could be fully utilised on digital channels and many Vietnamese banks have over 90 per cent of transactions on digital channels. Common technologies of the Industry 4.0, such as artificial intelligence, machine learning and big data, have been deployed, especially in the context of the recent pandemic. The demand for online transactions has increased rapidly, while the technology infrastructure of the banking industry was fully responsive. As digital transformation is also associated with information security, the banking industry has been proactive in building and investing in technology infrastructure to keep pace with the rapid growth of the market.

The State Bank of Việt Nam said that it would continue to improve mechanisms, policies, and legal frameworks, including the Law on Credit Institutions, the Law on the State Bank, and a mechanism for controlled testing of financial technology activities in the banking sector (sandbox) as well as regulations to facilitate the application of digital technology. The State Bank's Payment Department recommended accelerating the completion of standards for connection with the national population database and the citizen identity database, allowing sharing and open connection with other service industries such as banking, telecommunications, and insurance. In addition, in order to ensure the enhancement of people's trust in electronic transactions, and to further facilitate the implementation of digital applications in the banking sector, it was necessary to quickly amend the Law on Electronic Transactions 2005 to be more in line with the reality of the banking industry, it said. Also within the framework of Smart Banking 2022 event, the National Cyber Security Center (NCSC) under the Authority of Information Security, the Ministry of Information and Communications, co-ordinated with the Information Technology Department of the State Bank of Việt Nam to hold DF Cyber Defense, which will be the largest annual event on cyber attack prevention in the banking and financial sectors in Việt Nam. The DF Cyber Defense 2022 aims to increase co-ordination, hone skills, reduce processing time and react quickly to technically

equipped attacks, new tactics; improve the capacity of network safety and security of the staff in charge of information technology in financial institutions and banks.

From <https://vietnamnews.vn> 10/13/2022

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Prime Minister Pledges More Support for Businesses

The Government will create more favourable conditions for businesses and businesspeople in all economic sectors to gain fair access to development resources, Prime Minister Phạm Minh Chính said yesterday. Addressing a meeting held in Hà Nội by the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) to mark Vietnam Entrepreneurs Day (October 13), the leader attributed the achievements Việt Nam has recorded to the active participation of domestic entrepreneurs. The Party and the State always highly value the role of entrepreneurs and the business community, he stressed, commending their contributions to national construction and development, and poverty reduction. Việt Nam counts more than 900,000 operational enterprises, about 14,400 cooperatives and more than 5 million business households. The number of businesspeople has reached millions. The business circle makes up over 60 per cent of the national domestic product (GDP), and employs some 30 per cent of the workforce. The number of enterprises is expected to be at least 2 million by 2030, and the private economic sector is hoped to make up 60-65 per cent of the GDP.

The PM said the Government will further support entrepreneurs and the business community, helping them develop in both quality and quantity, and fulfill their social responsibilities. Solutions will be rolled out concertedly to facilitate people's and businesses' access to credit, while institutions, mechanisms and policies will be built and perfected to match the new situation, he continued. The leader noted that the Government will create conditions for the non-State economic sector to engage in socio-economic infrastructure projects in the form of public-private partnership (PPP), and work to promote the development of private firms, especially in processing, high-tech and IT. He urged them to invest more in scientific-technological application and high-quality personnel development, and to play a more active role in poverty reduction and community-based programmes, contributing to enhancing the great national solidarity bloc. The PM also asked ministries, agencies and localities to further support businesses. On this occasion, the organisers honoured 60 outstanding Vietnamese entrepreneurs in 2022. On behalf of the business community, the organisers also presented 16 houses to residents in Kỳ Sơn District, the central province of Nghệ An, who were affected by the recent floods, and 212 other houses to poor households nationwide. VNS

TOP10 Most Outstanding Entrepreneurs in Việt Nam in 2022

1. Mr Lê Mạnh Hùng, General Director of the Vietnam Oil and Gas Group
2. Mr Trần Bá Dương, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Trường Hải Auto

Corporation

3. Major General Nguyễn Quốc Dũng, Commander of the 11th Army Corps, Chairman of the Board of Directors and General Director of Thành An Corporation, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Corporation 789
4. Mr Vũ Văn Tiến, Chairman of the Board of Directors cum General Director of GELEXIMCO Group
5. Ms Thái Hương, Chairman of the Strategic Council of TH Group
6. Ms Nguyễn Thị Nga, Chairman of the Board of Directors of BRG Group
7. Mr Phạm Đình Đoàn, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Phú Thái Group Joint Stock Company
8. Mr Huỳnh Văn Thôn, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Lộc Trời Group Joint Stock Company
9. Mr Nguyễn Trung Chính, Chairman of the Board of Directors cum Executive Chairman of CMC Corporation
10. Mr Lý Ngọc Minh, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Minh Long I Co Ltd

From <https://vietnamnews.vn/> 10/13/2022

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58 Pct of Vietnamese Digital Consumers Use Fintech Solutions for Convenience

Vietnam is among the top markets in Southeast Asia in technology adoption, with 58 percent of digital consumers using fintech solutions including online banking solutions, e-wallets, money transfer applications and digital banking, local media reported on Tuesday. Along with Indonesia and the Philippines, Vietnam is among the fastest-adopting markets in the region in adopting future technologies such as fintech and metaverse, local newspaper Vietnam News cited a recent report on digital consumers in Southeast Asia. The use of digital technology in Vietnam is ripe and mainly driven by "functionality and convenience," according to the "SYNC Southeast Asia" report conducted by the U.S. social media giant Meta Platforms and the global management consulting firm Bain & Company. Nearly 80 percent of Vietnam's population is represented as digital consumers and this is a period when they use more platforms than ever before, with the dominance of the e-commerce market accounting for 51 percent of online spending, said the report. "In the context of digital consumption, Vietnamese users increase the number of platforms they use to find a better value, with 22 percent of online orders made on various e-commerce platforms," the newspaper cited Le Khoi, Country Director of Vietnam Market of Meta. The number of online platforms Vietnamese consumers use will increase from eight in 2021 to 16 in 2022, he said.

From <https://english.news.cn/> 10/25/2022

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South Asia

INDIA: Digitally Empowering Healthcare Enterprises – The Road Ahead

Technology has the potential to be the primary enabler to address the gaps present in the healthcare industry wherein the need for innovation and technology-driven change has become crucial now explains Kaanchi Chawla of Elets News Network (ENN). Digital health is a cornerstone of developed health systems all over the world. Over the last decade, the digital health industry has been increasing significantly. In 2020, over \$21 billion were invested in the industry, compared to around one billion U.S. dollars in 2010. The biggest digital health trend in the coming years will be patient-centric. However, funding and cost will be a big challenge. The healthcare industry has seen a paradigm shift toward technology after the pandemic. The usage of machine learning (ML) with electronic health records (EHR) is expanding in popularity as a mechanism to extract knowledge that can enhance the decision making process in healthcare. The prompt swiftness of development in India has resulted in a change in the sort and extent of diseases and healthcare needs. People's lifestyles have changed immensely because of widespread urbanisation and modernisation, and technology has given rise to many new, cost-effective treatments that have changed how healthcare is provided.

With the evolution of digitisation in healthcare, blockchain and cloud computing technologies have recreated a significant part in clinical data collection, storage, and exchange. The adoption of artificial intelligence (AI), the internet of things (IoT), and data management practices has made hospitals smarter and enhanced the workflow and staff scheduling of hospitals, by accelerating impartial and authentic treatment. The refinements in the healthcare industry range from e-consultations, telemedicine, and real-time diagnosis to accessing digital therapeutics fed by immersion technology tools. Genetic analysis, big data, and analytics clinical data storage allow the development of precise treatments. Outcomes in genomics, nano medicine, and regenerative medicine are providing personalised healthcare. Adding to this, Dr K Madangopal, Senior Consultant, NITI Aayog articulated his thoughts on the new innovations and technology adopted in the healthcare industry at the Elets Healthcare Innovation Summit. He expressed, "Technology and innovation are the keys to digital innovation. Digital health, mHealth, and other technologies have evolved in the country. In fact, the entire health system has evolved." The private sector claims that they are providing healthcare but if we look at the footfalls in the private and public sectors, it is more or less 50 per cent, while there is more expenditure in the private sector. 70 per cent of healthcare expenditure happens in the private sector and most of it is financed by out-of pocket expenses, which means 1.4 billion people are chasing around a million healthcare providers for seeking their care, he further added.

The healthcare industry in India is expanding at a rapid pace. We already acquired the technology, but its applications and adaptations emerged during the epidemic era.

With the Ayushman Bharat program, the Indian government established free, adequate healthcare for the most vulnerable members of society. The Government of India has furthermore developed Sustainable Development Goals that are to be accomplished within 2030. This is ensured as an endeavor to defeat poverty and ensure health and peace among the people. It aims at providing restorative living for people belonging to all age groups by eradicating and eliminating malnutrition and providing access to hygiene, sanitation, and safe drinking water. The healthcare system is in a crisis where there are many opportunities as well as obstacles. With the assistance of governments promoting cognition, understanding, and knowledge through various initiatives, it has a bright and optimistic future. In context with the adoption of technology, Manisha Kumar, Chief Operating Officer, HCG Hospitals, stated “During covid, we have seen an enormous disruption, especially in healthcare delivery. Doctors and patients adopted digital technologies and overcame the disruption by providing virtual consultations or teleconsultations. In the last decade, there has been an entry of a lot of technology intervention enablements in healthcare delivery such as teleconsultations, virtual consultations, telemedicine, teleradiology, but the adoption has been reluctant.”

Digital health solutions have grown in number significantly. Following the pandemic, the country's healthcare ecosystem has gained momentum. Technology can significantly contribute to achieving resource sharing and equality between public and private players. New technologies drive future technological innovation, which alters healthcare, but human factors continue to be a major barrier to progress. Technology drives the healthcare industry through various innovations with the tech-enabled industry. Artificial Intelligence, digitisation of healthcare worker enhances the efficiency of hospitals and assists in the smooth decision-making process. Although the pandemic posed an unprecedented threat to the nation's public health, it also coincided with the creation and expansion of a number of cutting-edge health technology companies, many of which were founded during the pandemic itself. Dr Charu Dutt Arora, Founder Member, and Head Consultant, Asian Institute of Medical Science stated, “The future of healthcare is at home because the primordial focus is on preventive wellness. It's from cure to care. The senior care or the home healthcare market grew at a compound interest rate of almost 19.5 per cent in 2021. With the augmentation of AI, big data, and machine learning software, it becomes more seamless, and proactive rather than less reactive. The healthcare industry has driven innovation into everything from healthcare delivery strategies to the production of technologies and equipment. The adoption of telemedicine and online pharmacies has increased at the same time that healthcare is shifting from hospitals to homes to 24/7 virtual care.

To implement technologies within individuals, it is necessary to build up awareness and train people. The new technologies are going to stay. It is essential for people to start adapting to these technologies. It will not only enhance them in the growth but will also keep their health data secured and optimised. Technology has the potential

to accelerate access, and enhance equity in coverage of health services by reaching the unreached. Technology interventions like IVRS and Telemedicine can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the healthcare value chain, shared Arun Kumar Singh, Additional Chief Secretary (H&FW), Government of Jharkhand. Further, technological advancements and adoption enable the expansion of transparency into every step of the medical life cycle for patients. It can help in bridging the gap, providing patients with straightforward and easy access to critical details and information from anywhere. According to IBEF, the Indian healthcare enterprise accounting for 80 per cent of the total healthcare market is anticipated to touch US\$132 billion by 2023. The healthcare market in India is expected to reach US\$372 billion by 2022, driven by rising income, better health awareness, lifestyle diseases, and increasing access to insurance. As of 2021, the Indian healthcare sector is one of India's largest employers as it employs a total of 4.7 million people. In the Union Budget 2022-23, Rs. 86,200.65 crores (US\$11.28 billion) was allocated to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW). The Indian government is intending to present a credit incentive programme worth Rs. 500 billion (US\$6.8 billion) to boost the country's healthcare infrastructure.

The government has taken several initiatives in strengthening the healthcare infrastructure. The Indian healthcare sector is expanding at a swift rate due to its strengthening range, benefits, and rising expenses by the public as well as private players. In the Economic Survey of 2022, India's public expenditure on healthcare stood at 2.1 per cent of GDP in 2021-22 against 1.8 per cent in 2020-21 and 1.3 per cent in 2019-20. The healthcare industry in India is highly varied, with numerous opportunities in each area, including providers, payers, and medical technology. Businesses are looking at the most significant characteristics and trends that will benefit their organisation in light of the growing competition. By 2025, the Indian government wants to increase public health spending to 2.5 per cent of GDP. Digital technology delivers hope for improving and enhancing healthcare access and quality. It is crucial to comprehend that in India it still has a long way to go. The necessity to adopt technology to stay apt in the rapidly evolving healthcare scenario has become pertinent. Technology led innovations will be the fortress on which future healthcare will evolve. The global pandemic has accelerated tech adoption in the healthcare sector and carries the potential to recast unsustainable healthcare systems into sustainable ones. Technology will also demonstrate to be an enabler in providing cost-effective, quicker, and more effective solutions for diseases. It is clearly evident that now is the time for healthcare technology organisations to invest in the real, long-lasting transformation that will benefit patients and providers across the country. The expansion of a mobile workforce combined with the continued acceptance of cutting-edge technologies will make the transformation possible. Looking ahead, it's crucial that the healthcare sector stays focused on a single objective: ensuring that everyone has access to high quality, extremely affordable treatment, regardless of their personal circumstances.

From <https://ehealth.eletsonline.com/> 10/01/2022

Google Collaborates with the Government of Assam to Promote Digital-led Learning

Google announced a collaboration with the government of Assam to promote digital-led learning and skill development for the state's students and youth. Google will work with the Assam Government's Skill, Employment, and Entrepreneurship Department (SEED) to improve school digitalisation efforts by providing learning tools and solutions. Google would provide scholarships for Google Career Certificates to Assamese youngsters in partnership with the Assam Skill Development Mission (ASDM). Under the terms of the agreement, Google will work with ASDM to provide scholarships and comprehensive training to help students become job-ready for the growing demand for digital talent. The program will assist qualified applicants in obtaining Google career credentials in high-demand industries such as IT assistance, IT automation, project management, and data analytics. "Through a hiring pool that recognizes the credentials, these learners will also be able to connect with firms who have an ongoing demand for these talents," the statement continued.

From <https://egov.eletsonline.com> 10/19/2022

SRI LANKA: Bileeta Partners with USAID CATALYZE Private Sector Development (PSD) to Offer Tech Support to SMEs

Bileeta, one of Sri Lanka's top ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) solutions providers, has joined hands with USAID CATALYZE Sri Lanka Private Sector Development (PSD), to provide cutting-edge ERP solutions to eligible SME customers, through a special grant programme. These solutions will be provided in collaboration with and through partnerships facilitated by PSD with financial institutions, umbrella organizations, professional associations, and lead firms. The USAID CATALYZE Sri Lanka Private Sector Development (PSD) Activity PSD aims to develop a competitive and thriving private sector. The Activity's focus is on empowering women in the labour force, accelerating inclusive growth through MSMEs and partners that deliver economic empowerment by improving the capacity and competitiveness of MSMEs, improving access and availability of financing for MSMEs, and increasing MSME adaptation and resilience. While SMEs account for 52% of GDP in Sri Lanka, a lack of technological expertise and integration is the most common challenge faced by the sector, hindering growth and making effective competition challenging, both locally and globally.

Thus, this exclusive collaboration between Bileeta and PSD will enable eligible SMEs to streamline their businesses through the implementation of technology in areas such as sales and invoicing, inventory management, accounting & finance,

purchasing and reporting. A kick-off meeting to mark the inauguration of this partnership between Bileeta and PSD was held at the USAID CATALYZE Sri Lanka Office at Aitken Spence Towers. Juan Forero, Activity Team Lead, PSD and Chief Executive Officer at Bileeta, Sanji De Silva were both present at the occasion. Sharing his thoughts, Mr De Silva said, “We have seen Technology bring about rapid and revolutionary growth in organizations. We are truly honoured to partner with PSD to bring about such an impactful move in the SME sector in Sri Lanka. SMEs need our support now more than ever, and we are humbled to extend our expertise in ERP solutions to promote growth in this sector.”

PSD’s Activity Team Lead, Juan Forero commented, “At USAID Catalyze we believe in the power of harnessing the private sector to accelerate the path of growth and development in a sustainable way. With that in mind, we have started our collaboration with Bileeta, to offer top-of-the-line ERP solutions to Small & Medium businesses in Sri Lanka, in partnership with lead financial institutions and large companies”. Bileeta is an award-winning technology company that takes pride in developing enterprise solutions to empower various industries, with a focus on offering better experiences for all. The Company focuses on adaptability, speed of delivery, quality and ease of use, while also working with global organizations such as UNDP, USAID, Chemonics and The Global Fund, to provide world class solutions to local and global organizations in the public and private sectors. The USAID CATALYZE Private Sector Development (PSD) Activity is a 5-year activity designed to bolster Micro, Small- and Medium-Enterprises (MSMEs) in high-growth-potential sectors in Sri Lanka. Focus sectors include tourism, information and communication technology (ICT), apparel, commercial care and food processing, with a special emphasis being placed on women-owned and run enterprises, to promote female entrepreneurship in Sri Lanka.

From <https://egov.eletsonline.com> 10/06/2022

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Low Interest Working Capital Loan Scheme for SMEs Under ADB Credit Line

Small and medium enterprises can avail of working capital loans from banks through a loan scheme facilitated under an existing ADB credit line, the Finance Ministry said. Sectors expected to provide loans: Agricultural, tourism, and export-oriented sectors. Main conditions of the loan scheme: Maximum loan amount is Rs. 10 million. The loan amount can be paid in a maximum of three (03) years with a maximum grace period of six (06) months. Interest Rate: 11% – 12%. Accordingly, Rs. 4,900 million have been distributed among the following eight banks for this working capital loan scheme, the Finance Ministry added. Bank of Ceylon. Regional Development Bank. Hatton National Bank. Commercial Bank. Seylan Bank. National Development Bank. Nations Trust Bank. Sampath Bank.

From <https://egov.eletsonline.com> 10/27/2022

Microsoft Launches Founders Hub in Sri Lanka

Microsoft for Startups Founders Hub was recently launched in Sri Lanka to empower local startup founders to turn their ideas into reality and help boost the economy. The Microsoft for Startups Founders Hub is designed to remove traditional barriers to building a company and help founders innovate and grow, regardless of their background, location, progress, or passions. Budding startups in Sri Lanka can now gain access to technology, expertise, and software benefits, which includes access to proprietary technology tools such as Azure credits, Microsoft 365, GitHub Enterprise, Visual Studio Enterprise, Power BI Pro, Power Platform Power Automate and more. Microsoft for Startups Founders Hub is centered around three key areas: **Unlocking innovation for all:** The platform eliminates traditional barriers founders face when getting started, such as venture capital requirements or third-party validation to help any founder regardless of background, location or access be successful. **Technology benefits that grow:** Keeping pace with a startup's lifecycle, the platform helps founders speed development with free access to GitHub Enterprise and the Microsoft Azure with the ability to unlock additional benefits over time. To address the unique needs of startups, Microsoft has partnered with innovative companies like OpenAI, a global leader in AI research and deployment, that develops AI systems such as GPT-3 and Codex to provide startups with exclusive benefits and discounts. **Access to mentorship and guidance:** Becoming a founder is no longer about "who you know." Through the platform, startups can connect with industry veterans, access tailored startup-centric training and innovate quickly with expert technical guidance.

Sook Hoon Cheah – General Manager, Southeast Asia New Markets at Microsoft delivered the keynote at the launch event, held on the 27th of October 2022 at the Kingsbury Hotel Colombo, under the theme "Made in Asia' to 'Born in Asia'" to showcase the potential of the ambitious startup ecosystem in Sri Lanka to reach global heights with the power of Microsoft technology. During her keynote she said, "Asia is expected to generate half of the world's GDP by 2050 and account for more than half of all R&D investments by 2030. 'Made in Asia' exports are being overtaken by high value 'Born in Asia' creativity, originality, and innovation that promises to shape the rest of the 21st century. With the power of Azure, startups are able to do more with less across their entire lifecycle. We see massive potential to be unlocked in Sri Lanka and the role they play in reviving the country's economy." The event also included a panel discussion which represented key personalities of the startup ecosystem including founders, incubators, accelerators, and policy maker/governance body ICTA. These panelists shared their learnings and expertise about the startup landscape in Sri Lanka including the challenges commonly faced and solutions to overcome them. Moderated by Chinthaka Dunuwille, SMB Lead for Sri Lanka & Maldives at Microsoft, the panel featured Sachindra Samararatne –

Associate Chief Digital Economy Officer at ICTA, Jeevan Gnanam – Co-Founder of Hatch Sri Lanka, Jiffry Zulfer – Founder & CEO of PickMe (Digital Mobility Solutions Lanka (PVT) Ltd) and Viranga Kekulawala – Founder and CEO of EIMSKY Business Solutions Pvt Ltd. Matthew Hardman – Chief Technology Officer for Global Partner Solutions in APAC and Suwani Senani – Cloud Solution Architect at Microsoft jointly presented a tech session for the audience on “Build with Azure” which demonstrated tools, technologies and features for startups to build with Azure cloud.

“In spite of a very challenging economic landscape, investment towards the local startup ecosystem of Sri Lanka grew at 13% in 2021. With the launch of Microsoft for Startups Founders Hub in Sri Lanka, we are enabling incubation at scale for local startups to fuel the economy and take innovation from Sri Lanka to the world stage,” said Harsha Randeny – Country Manager for Microsoft Sri Lanka and Maldives. Microsoft for Startups Founders Hub launching in Sri Lanka stands as a testament to the tech company’s strife for driving growth among startups in the country. By harnessing the array of Microsoft technologies on offer to startups, they can uniquely position themselves to take their businesses global, eventually resulting in returns for the entire nation. Microsoft Sri Lanka has been present in Sri Lanka since 2004.

From <https://egov.eletsonline.com> 10/30/2022

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Central-West Asia

AZERBAIJAN: Holding Regular Auction on State Property Privatization

The State Service on Property Issues under the Azerbaijani Ministry of Economy held a regular auction for the privatization of state-owned property, Trend reports via the ministry. According to the ministry, 13 vehicles and one non-residential premise, which is located in Aghsu district, were privatized following the results of the auction. The sale of vehicles aroused great interest. The offer for one of the vehicles exceeded the starting price. Russian-made Gaz car with a start price of 3,000 manat (\$1,760) was purchased for 4,070 manat (\$2,390). The next auctions will be held on October 11, 18 and 25. A total of six packages of shares of joint stock companies, 40 small state-owned enterprises and facilities, and 130 vehicles will be put up for auctions.

From <https://en.trend.az> 10/05/2022

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Azerbaijani IT Company Talks Its Activities in Liberated Territories

Zetnet provider of Azerbaijan’s A2Z Technologies company is rendering IT services in Karabakh, the head of commercial department at Zetnet Tural Huseynov told

Trend on October 20. According to Huseynov, the company provides liberated territories with internet services. "In Karabakh, we have created a modern communication network at the facilities. We also ensure the technological security of some facilities," he said. Besides, the head of the department noted that the company also provides its services in eight other regions of Azerbaijan, including Baku and Absheron. "In these areas, we mainly provide internet services. Work to expand the geography of the provision of services is ongoing," added Huseynov.

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ADB Working with Foreign Companies to Develop Tech Startup Competition in Azerbaijan

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is working with foreign companies to develop a technology startup competition in Azerbaijan, Senior Project Officer at Asian Development Bank (ADB) Sabina Jafarova said on October 28 during the presentation of a report on the ecosystem of technology startups in the country, Trend reports. "We are working with US and German companies to establish partnerships in the field of knowledge, as well as with several foreign companies to prepare a competition for technology startups in the country," Jafarova noted. According to her, the \$500,000 project to promote the development of local technology startups aims to build local capacity to effectively promote startups. Within the framework of the project, such stages as the preparation of a diagnostic report, an action plan, as well as a strategy report have already been completed. A number of human capacity building workshops were also held, she said. "All support for technology start-ups was concentrated in the capital, but we wanted to bring it to the regions of Azerbaijan. We started working with a number of government agencies and universities in cities such as Ganja and Shamakhi," she said.

From <https://en.trend.az> 10/28/2022

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Azerbaijan to Create Database on Public-Private Partnership Projects

A new database will be created on projects of public-private partnership in Azerbaijan, Trend reports citing Azerbaijani Parliament (Milli Majlis). This issue was reflected in the new draft law "On public-private partnership", which was discussed at today's meeting of Azerbaijani Parliament's (Milli Majlis) Committee on Economic Policy, Industry, and Entrepreneurship. According to the draft law, the authorized body will be created that will control the electronic database on projects of public-private partnership, the conditions and criteria for selecting the winner of the tender, the main terms of the public-private partnership agreement, the preparation and implementation of public-private partnership projects, including current and completed projects within the framework of public-private partnership agreements,

reports on the status of project implementation. The parties of the public-private partnership agreement submit a copy of agreement with the relevant documents to the authorized body with seven working days after its conclusion or amendment, in order to enter this information into the database, in accordance with Article 35.1 of the law.

From <https://en.trend.az> 10/28/2022

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Oceania

AUSTRALIA: Attracting Talents, Enterprises to Boost Competitiveness

The Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, used his maiden Policy Address today (October 19), to outline the Government's strategies to compete for enterprises and talents to strengthen the city's competitiveness. Mr Lee's initiatives include setting up an Office for Attracting Strategic Enterprises (OASES) and a Top Talent Pass Scheme as well as enhancing existing talent admission schemes. "Hong Kong has advanced infrastructure in both hardware and software, a sound legal system and top-notch talents from all over the world," Mr Lee said. "An open and diversified metropolis where old and new styles meet, Hong Kong is also an appealing city embracing both Chinese and Western cultures." Mr Lee unveiled an array of initiatives to attract enterprises and talents. They include:

- * establishing OASES, led by the Financial Secretary, for attracting strategic enterprises from the Mainland and overseas by offering them special facilitation measures and one-stop services;
- * establishing a Talents Service Unit, led by the Chief Secretary for Administration, for formulating strategies to recruit talents from the Mainland and overseas and co-ordinating relevant work, as well as providing one-stop support for incoming talents;
- * setting up Dedicated Teams for Attracting Businesses and Talents in the Mainland Offices and overseas Economic and Trade Offices (ETOs) of the Government to proactively reach out to target enterprises and talents and persuade them to pursue development in Hong Kong;
- * setting aside \$30 billion from the Future Fund to establish the Co-Investment Fund for attracting enterprises to set up operations in Hong Kong and investing in their businesses;

- * launching the Top Talent Pass Scheme to widely entice talents to pursue their careers in Hong Kong;
- * enhancing existing talent admission schemes to better attract talents; and
- * allowing eligible incoming talents to, upon becoming permanent residents, apply for a refund of the extra stamp duty paid for purchasing residential property in Hong Kong. "The OASES to be established within this year will be tasked with attracting high-potential and representative strategic enterprises from around the globe, particularly those from industries of strategic importance, such as life and health technology, artificial intelligence and data science, financial technology, and

advanced manufacturing and new energy technology,” Mr Lee said. The proposed Co-Investment Fund, Mr Lee said, would consider co-investing in individual projects of the target enterprises, taking into account their potential of driving the industry development in Hong Kong.

The Government will also waive the requirement of applying for an employment visa for more visitors participating in short-term activities in Hong Kong. With innovation and technology (I&T) being a core development focus of the Government, Mr Lee said the Government would enlarge the talent pool for the tech sector. Additional measures to be rolled out include: * providing special facilitation measures to attract top-notch I&T talents to bring with them their businesses or research and development outcomes to Hong Kong; * enhancing the Technology Talent Admission Scheme by lifting the local employment requirement, extending the quota validity period to two years and expanding the coverage to more emerging technology areas; * building more accommodation facilities for I&T talents; and * expanding the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Internship Scheme, so as to offer local I&T internship opportunities to university students studying STEM programmes overseas or at the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) campuses established by designated local universities.

To be more proactive in reaching out to target talents and enterprises, the Chief Executive said the functions of Mainland Offices and overseas ETOs of the Government would be expanded to include dedicated teams that would enhance promotion of Hong Kong in Mainland and overseas markets. Many sectors in Hong Kong are facing manpower shortage, such as residential care homes, construction and transport sectors, Mr Lee said, adding that relevant bureaux would listen to the views of the sectors, and put forward solutions having regard to the situation of individual sectors. To expedite Hong Kong’s progression into an East-meets-West centre for international Cultural exchange, as set out in the National 14th Five-Year Plan, the Chief Executive highlighted the need to foster creative talents and attract leading lights in arts and culture from around the world to come to Hong Kong.

The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts is exploring ways to nurture arts and cultural talents for Hong Kong and the GBA, and to establish a new campus in the Northern Metropolis and raise the proportion of non-local students. “Also, to establish a thriving and diversified arts, cultural and creative ecosystem, we will continue to attract more talents in and outside Hong Kong to pursue their aspirations here,” Mr Lee said.

From <https://afndaily.com.au> 10/20/2022

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NEW ZEALAND: Govt Rolls Out Mental Health and Wellbeing Tools to Small Businesses

“The last couple of years have been extremely difficult for small businesses in New Zealand, and I’m very pleased that the ‘First Steps’ programme will now be available to those outside the Auckland region, providing mental health and wellness resources tailored to businesses,” Stuart Nash said. “We’ve heard from small business owners and employees that operating throughout the pandemic has resulted in increased feelings of stress and isolation, which has had significant negative impacts on mental wellbeing. “First Steps offers preventative support for business owners, managers, and employees that aims to reduce the number of those in crisis by providing a variety of tools, resources, and perspectives. “There are an estimated 546,000 small businesses here in New Zealand and up to 1.2 million individuals who are owners or employees.

Rolling out First Steps across the country will mean that they all get access to Government-funded mental health and wellbeing tools to support them as they recover from the pandemic. “Our recovery not only relies on economic performance – equally important is the mental health and wellbeing of all Kiwis. It’s clear this is a much-needed service to help our business community. “Small businesses are an essential part of our economy, represented right across different industries and regions – including tradespeople, dairy farmers, retail and café owners. Our Government is committed to making sure these mental health and wellbeing tools are tailored to the different audiences to provide maximum support. Rural Communities Minister Damien O’Connor says that the step will be important across the provinces.

“Rural communities are a fabric woven together by small businesses. It’s important when it is needed by individuals, that help with mental health is available because it helps with rural resilience,” Damien O’Connor said. “I commend the Auckland Business Chamber, the EMA, and all the partners who developed the First Steps platform. Because of this work, New Zealand is one of few countries that developed mental health resources to support the small business sector during this time of crisis,” Stuart Nash said.

From <https://livenews.co.nz> 10/14/2022

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SOLOMON ISLANDS: New Sources of Growth and More Efficient Public Sector Essential

With Solomon Islands implementing a large public investment program and facing declining logging revenue, fiscal reform will be vital to managing debt levels while securing hard-fought development gains, says a new report from the World Bank, launched today. The report, Solomon Islands Public Expenditure Review: Fiscal Reform and the Path to Debt Sustainability, suggests warns that without reform, Solomon Islands’ debt may become unsustainable. It suggests that in a business-as-usual scenario, public debt will reach the Government threshold of 35

percent of GDP as early as 2026. However, if reforms are prioritized, modelling undertaken in the report suggests public debt will stabilize at about 27 percent of GDP, leaving sufficient funds for Government to address key development issues while building a stronger and more resilient economy.

“A large amount of infrastructure construction in the country is putting Solomon Islands on a bold new growth path. This includes externally funded roads and airport upgrades, sporting facilities for the 2023 Pacific Games, renewable energy, and health infrastructure,” said Annette Leith, World Bank Resident Representative for Solomon Islands & Vanuatu. “These opportunities also come with some risk and responsibilities as the new works will add annual maintenance costs of around SBD388 million (USD47.57 million). These pressures need to be carefully considered and planned for, because we know that for every \$1 invested in maintenance \$5 is saved on replacement costs.” The Public Expenditure Review analyses the potential impact of the introduction and successful implementation of a Value Added Tax and models what improvements to tax collection could mean for public finances. It also highlights the potential for growth and revenue generation in the mining sector, but significant improvements to the governance and management of the mining industry is essential for these to be realized and for the sector to become sustainable.

“We have worked closely with the World Bank in their preparation of this analysis, and it provides useful guidance for government policies. We know we can expect a decline in logging revenues and identifying ways to diversify our country’s income is a key focus of this government,” said McKinnie Dentana, Permanent Secretary of Solomon Islands’ Ministry of Finance. “The Public Expenditure Review recognizes existing government work to introduce a Value Added Tax, reform inland revenue collection, strengthen the management of the mining sector and improve the efficiency of government spending. “We are happy to be launching this insightful review and look forward to continuing to work with the World Bank to support our efforts to achieve a stronger economy for Solomon Islands.”

The new report also looks at how to improve efficiency in public expenditure, recommending a review of the Public Sector Wage Bill and better reflecting donor funds while increasing efficiency in health expenditure. In addition, the report suggests investing in local institutions so government scholarship programs could be increasingly directed to education facilities within the country instead of overseas. “The Public Expenditure Review makes clear that there are opportunities to balance government finances in Solomon Islands,” said Lodewijk Smets, World Bank Country Economist for Solomon Islands. “However, it also shows that without concerted efforts to do so, Solomon Islands may be at risk of falling into debt distress that could be damaging for the economy and the country as a whole.

“We’re pleased to be able to provide this analysis to support the government’s

policy-making to ensure the hard-fought improvements to health, wellbeing, education and livelihoods of Solomon Islanders are being secured, well into the future.” In addition to analysis and advisory assistance the World Bank in Solomon Islands supports large scale infrastructure projects such as the Tina River Hydropower project and the Solomon Islands Roads and Aviation Project. The World Bank’s portfolio in Solomon Islands includes projects in both rural and urban centers such as the Community Access and Urban Service Enhancement Project (CAUSE), oceans and fisheries management assistance, agriculture, budget support, and collaboration with the Provincial Governments to increase rural access to economic and social infrastructure.

From <https://www.worldbank.org/> 10/26/2022

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UNPAN-AP Editorial Department, RCOCI

