



CACCI Foundation approves grant for three project proposals



The CACCI Foundation has decided to award funding grants of US\$5,000 for each of the three project proposals submitted by member chambers from India, Sri Lanka, and Papua New Guinea, that will aid in SME development during these especially difficult times.

The three proposals include:

- a. Training Workshops for SMEs/Start-ups on Digital Marketing – Proposed by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), project aims to train Indian SMEs and startups and handhold them to explore several aspects of the new digital marketing environment
- b. Business Continuity Support for COVID-19 Affected SMEs – Submitted by the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce

(CCC), the proposed project aims to provide business continuity support for COVID affected SMEs, revive their businesses, and sustain their businesses in the long run.

- c. Revitalization of the Kavieng Club – Submitted by the New Ireland Chamber of Commerce (an affiliated member of the PNGCCI), the project aims to revitalize the Kavieng Club – a private Members Club in Papua New Guinea – to a standard that can be better enjoyed by its members and their guests, thereby offering employment, encouraging surrounding businesses to lift their standards as well, and stimulating the local economy to assist the prosperity and growth of Kavieng town over the medium and long-term.

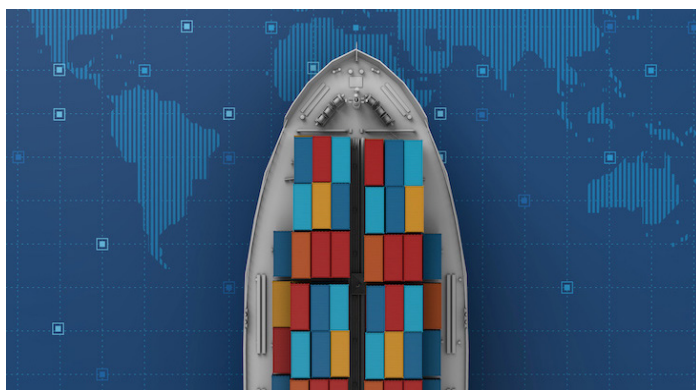
The proposals were submitted to the CACCI Secretariat and then reviewed by the CACCI Advisory Board. According to Advisory Board Chairman Mr. Kenneth Court, the Board underscored the need to find ways of building up the CACCI Foundation funds to enable the Confederation to further help the development of SMEs in CACCI member countries by financing projects that will help encourage entrepreneurship and provide employment especially in less developed member countries of CACCI. This is particularly important during these uncertain times when many businesses are closing down and livelihoods are lost.

The Advisory Board made recommendations to approve the awarding of grants to the three projects. The recommendations subsequently received final approval from council members during the 92nd CACCI Council Meeting on November 20.

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CACCI Council endorses research study on “Resurrecting the World Trading System”



Council members at the recently concluded 92nd CACCI Council Meeting last November 20 approved the proposal made by the CACCI Advisory Board to commission a research study on “Resurrecting the World Trading System.”

In 1990, CACCI commissioned the Centre for International Economics in Australia – under the leadership of Dr. Andrew Stoeckel - to undertake a study and report entitled “Western Trade Blocs”. Today, some 30 years on and with the pandemic, trade tensions, military tensions, the rise of China and the rules-based order faltering with the World Trade Organization (WTO) losing its way, it was proposed

that CACCI should again conduct a contemporary study on trade liberalisation.

To this end, several CACCI Officers, among them Advisory Board Chariman Mr. Kenneth Court, President Samir Modi, CACCI Vice President Mr. Peter McMullin, and Mr. Bryan Clark from the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) — once again approached Dr. Stoeckel – currently Honorary Professor at the Centre for Applied Macroeconomic Analysis at the Australian National University – to prepare a proposal on the research study, which will cover:

- The world trading system as a public good
- The demise of the trading system and WTO
- Why this breakdown matters
- Why the breakdown happened
- What to do to fix the system

The research study is estimated to be completed within 12 months, with the final draft ready in 10 months. Review of the final draft is expected to be completed in one month, with an additional month to incorporate comments.

The CACCI Council agreed on the importance of the proposed study to help address current issues surrounding trade and investment, while at the same time raising the profile of CACCI as a serious policy advocate for the business sector.

CACCI Officers’ Term Extended for One Year

The CACCI Council has decided to extend the term of the incumbent officers for another year until the next CACCI Conference in 2021.

The two-year term of the incumbent CACCI officers was originally due to end at the 92nd CACCI Council Meeting last November 20, 2020. However, given the uncertainties, limitations and generally extraordinary circumstances brought about by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, it was decided that a term extension would be better than conducting an election of new CACCI officers to serve for the next two years.

According to CACCI Advisory Board Chairman Mr. Kenneth Court Mr. Court, the suggestion to extend the term of the incumbent office bearers for another year is based on a logistical issue, explaining that whoever is elected will be travel-restricted for a year, possibly longer. Hence, he said the Advisory Board agreed that it might be best to stay with the known team given the current circumstances. He added that the next election will be held at the 2021 Conference, once the travel situation has normalized.

CACCI Journal of Commerce & Industry 2020 issue released

JOURNAL OF
COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

Vol. 1, 2020

Beyond the Pandemic:
Challenges and Opportunities



CONFEDERATION OF ASIA-PACIFIC
CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

The Confederation of Asia-Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CACCI) has released the Vol. 1, 2020 edition of the CACCI Journal of Commerce & Industry, “Beyond the Pandemic: Challenges and Opportunities.”

The latest issue of the annual publication focuses on the COVID-19 pandemic and the many challenges and unique opportunities

it has brought to businesses, organizations, and the global trade system. Among the articles featured are those written by experts from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Insights and analyses published by professionals on BRINK — the news service of Marsh & McLennan Insights — are also included.

Singapore Business Federation to Host 2021 CACCI Conference



CACCI is pleased to announce that next year's 35th CACCI Conference will be hosted by the Singapore Business Federation (SBF) tentatively in August 2021. It will be the first time that the annual gathering will be held in Singapore.

The SBF offer to host the 2021 CACCI Conference was welcomed by the CACCI Council during the 92nd CACCI Council Meeting. The event had originally been

scheduled to be hosted by the Wellington Chamber of Commerce (WCC) in October 2021 in Wellington, New Zealand, in conjunction with Meeting of the APEC Finance Ministers scheduled at that time. However, following the New Zealand government's decision to move APEC 2021 to a virtual platform, as well as the uncertainty around the country's international border, the WCC has said it will not be possible to host a face-to-face Conference in Wellington in 2021.

Details about the 2021 CACCI Conference, such as exact dates, venue, etc. will be announced as soon as arrangements are finalized by SBF. In the meantime, for further questions, please email the CACCI Secretariat at cacci@cacci.biz.

CACCI Awards Nomination Deadline Extended until end of May 2021



The deadline for submission of online nomination for the CACCI Awards has officially been extended for six months, as per the consensus made during the CACCI Council Meeting held virtually on November 20, 2020.

Member Chambers may now continue to submit their online nominations for the four CACCI Awards, namely the 9th Local Chamber Awards, 8th Asia-Pacific Young Entrepreneur Award, 3rd Asia-Pacific Woman Entrepreneur Award, and 4th Hydropower and Clean Energy Excellence Award, until May 31, 2021.

With the next CACCI Conference still at least 10 months away, Council Members proposed the deadline

extension as a way to increase the number of nominations, and encourage other Members to participate in the Awards Program.

The online nominations for each of the Awards will be submitted to the Awards Committee for preliminary evaluation once the deadline has lapsed. Those getting the highest scores will be short-listed as finalists. The short-listed finalists for each Award will undergo

a final selection process conducted by the Boards of Judges during the 35th CACCI Conference. The announcement of winners will be made during the Gala Dinner of the Conference.

To submit online nominations for each of the following four Award categories, please click on the respective links below:

- [9th Local Chamber Awards](#)
- [8th Asia-Pacific Young Entrepreneur Award](#)
- [3rd Asia-Pacific Woman Entrepreneur Award](#)
- [4th Hydropower and Clean Energy Excellence Award](#)



Dear CACCJ Members and Friends,

Merry Christmas



*As the year 2020 comes to a close,
we gratefully pause to wish you a warm and
happy holiday season.*

*Sincerely,
CACCJ Secretariat*



CACCI Council Approves 2021 CACCI Work Program

The CACCI Work Program for 2021-2022 was approved by the Council during the 92nd CACCI Council Meeting, which was conducted virtually on November 20, 2020.

During the meeting, CACCI Secretary-General Mr. Ernest Lin informed the Council that the 2021-2022 Work Program outlines activities to be undertaken by CACCI in the next two years to achieve the following objectives:

- To help promote and raise the profile and importance of CACCI not only among its members but regionally and internationally as well
- To further strengthen CACCI's policy advocacy efforts in order to create a business environment conducive to creating better business opportunities for CACCI members
- To play a more active role in regional cooperation efforts by capitalizing on its link with the national chambers.
- To further strengthen relationships with other

international organizations

- To further strengthen communication links among CACCI member countries
- To conduct training and capacity-building activities to help broaden the knowledge and technical skills of businessmen in the region
- To develop programs that will make the Product and Service Councils effective vehicles for promoting greater business interaction among CACCI members
- To continue to find ways and means of expanding membership in the Confederation.
- To make CACCI Presidential visits as an effective means for gathering first-hand information on the business situation in member countries,
- To continue to make the CACCI Council Meetings and Conferences effective fora for exchanging information on issues of concern to members, as well as for exploring business opportunities

CACCI publishes latest editions of Product and Service Council Newsletters



The Confederation of Asia-Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CACCI) has published the latest editions of three Product and Service Council (PSC) Newsletters for Food and Agriculture, Health and Education, and Tourism.

The Food and Agriculture Newspaper is the publication of the Asian Council on Food and Agriculture (ACFA), which serves as a platform for an exchange of information among the food & agriculture sectors in the CACCI region. The fifteenth volume, released last November 2020, highlights the trends, the latest news and interesting reports on food and agriculture in the Asia-Pacific region, which

include the use of digital technology in food systems, data-based farming, the effect of climate change on rice harvests, and the issue of food waste, to name a few.

The CACCI Health and Education Newsletter is the official publication of the Asian Council on Health and Education (ACHE). The 15th Volume was released in December 2020 and includes articles on mental health,

telemedicine, and remote learning in the COVID-19 era.

The Tourism Newsletter serves as the official publication of the Asian Council on Tourism (ACT). Volume 23, which was released in November 2020, focuses on the state of the travel and tourism industry during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. The Newsletter includes articles that feature the many ways countries are adapting to the current circumstances, such as livestreams, immersive videos, and mock trips abroad. It also touches on the emergence of sustainable tourism as industries grapple with the new normal.

CACCI Publishes 2020 Year-End Review

The Confederation of Asia-Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CACCI) has published its 2020 Year-End Review, which summarizes the Confederation's activities over the past year.

With COVID-19 bringing unprecedented difficulties globally for most of 2020, CACCI, like many organizations, has similarly been affected by the pandemic. The Confederation's leadership has had to re-strategize cancelled events, meetings and other activities, postponing several planned gatherings, programs, and events indefinitely until the pandemic is safely over. Day-to-day activities likewise needed to be re-thought to deal with the changes and challenges caused by the health crisis.

Nevertheless, CACCI this year has managed to push through with several activities, including the 34th CACCI Conference and the 92nd CACCI Council Meeting, both of which were held



virtually for the first time last October 30 and November 20, respectively. CACCI also successfully conducted a virtual conference on "Roadmap Towards Back-to-Business for Asia Pacific Countries" last June 2020; and participated in forums organized by TOBB, WCC, ICC and ASEAN-BAC.

Due to the circumstances brought about by the pandemic, several member chambers have been working with their respective governments in implementing stimulus packages to help confront the economic challenges posed

by the COVID-19 situation. CACCI assisted in this endeavor by providing access to webinars conducted by its Knowledge Partners and aimed at helping companies tackle the consequences of the pandemic and attain business continuity during the crisis.

Moving forward, CACCI will endeavor to assist in efforts to implement plans and strategies – while working closely with members – to quickly adapt to the various challenges and to maintain resilience.

CACCI Director-General Hosts Lunch for Officers of the Indonesian Representative Office in Taipei



Mr. Ernest Lin, Director-General of the Confederation of Asia-Pacific Chambers of Commerce, on December 15 hosted lunch for officers of the Indonesia Economic and Trade Office to Taipei. The Indonesian guests included Mr. Ali Fauzi, Director of Investment Department; Mr. Winky AnggaPriatna, Director of Industry; Mr. Arif Sulistiyo, Director



of Trade; Mr. Adila, Director of Tourism and Transportation Department; Mr. Yoseph Marundurim, Assistant to Director of Industry Department; and Ms. Irene Pan from the Investment Department. Also attending the lunch were other officers of the CACCI Secretariat and the CTBC Financial Holding Co.

CACCI Secretariat Joins “Feast in Yingge: 2020 New Taipei Year-End Reception”



CACCI Deputy Director-General Amador Honrado (Left photo, 2nd from left) joined other invited guests at the Feast in Yingge: 2020 New Year-End Reception held by the New Taipei City Government for members of the diplomatic corps in Taiwan on December 5 at the Yingge Ceramics Museum. Hosted by New Taipei City Mayor Dr. Hou Yu-ih

(center photo), the event also featured a fashion show which showcased avant garde designs of some of the top Taiwanese designers using high-end, high-quality Taiwanese textiles (top right photo). The event's venue – Yingge Ceramics Museum - is the first professional pottery museum in Taiwan and presents 200 years of ceramic techniques and folk culture in Taiwan. The event also coincided with the ongoing “Taiwan Ceramics Biennale”, the only large international ceramic art exhibition held in Taiwan (bottom right photo) which aims to introduce the Taiwanese people to the very latest contemporary ceramic art work and also invite international ceramic artists to Taiwan where they can learn more about Taiwanese ceramic art culture.

CACCI Secretariat Attends Food Taipei Mega Shows 2020

CACCI Deputy Director-General Amador Honrado attended the opening day of the Food Taipei Mega Shows 2020 held on December 17, 2020 at the Taipei Nangang Exhibition Center, Hall 1.

Organized by the Taiwan External Development Council (TAITRA), which is the island's foremost nonprofit trade promoting organization, the Food Taipei Mega Shows 2020 took place on December 17-20 in conjunction with five other major shows including Food Tech, Biopharmatech Taiwan, Taipei Pack, Taiwan Horeca and Halal Taiwan.

Food Taipei is one of the most important food fairs in Asia, providing participants the opportunity to meet senior buyers and decision makers. This year's event featured a comprehensive range of food including fresh fruits and vegetables, preserved fruits and vegetables, poultry, seafood, meat and processed meat products, edible oils, dairy products, vegetarian and organic food, frozen prepared food, canned food, baked food, biscuits, wine and liquor, coffee and tea, juice and soft drinks, condiments and confectionery. It also showcased all kinds of food processing and packaging technologies, machines, materials, systems and products under one roof.



G20 vows fair distribution of COVID-19 vaccines to all nations



Leaders of the Group of 20 major economies pledged on November 23 to do their utmost to ensure all nations have fair access to COVID-19 vaccines when they are developed and to cushion the global economy from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

The G20 countries will “spare no effort” to ensure “affordable and equitable access” to COVID-19 therapeutics and vaccines for everyone, the leaders said in a declaration released after their two-day virtual meeting chaired by Saudi Arabia.

The leaders said they “stand united in our conviction that coordinated global action, solidarity, and multilateral cooperation are more necessary today than ever to overcome the current challenges.”

While the world economy is partially picking up, its recovery from the slump caused by the novel coronavirus pandemic remains “uneven, highly uncertain and subject to elevated downside risks,” the G20 leaders said, touching on renewed outbreaks in some economies.

“We underscore the urgent need to bring the spread of the virus under control, which is key to supporting global economic recovery. We are determined to continue to use all available policy tools as long as required to safeguard people’s lives, jobs and incomes,” the leaders said.

During the summit, Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga emphasized the importance of guaranteeing universal access by supplying treatment drugs and vaccines for COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus, through

a system to manage global patents, according to a senior official.

An international framework to manage patents “would contribute to a large supply of COVID-19 drugs at an affordable cost for all countries and G20 support is vital,” Suga was quoted as saying by the official. He also reiterated his commitment to make Japan carbon neutral by 2050, as he pledged in his first policy speech in the Diet last month, according to the official.

The G20 nations, meanwhile, endorsed a plan, already agreed on by their finance ministers and central bank governors, to extend their debt repayment suspension program for poor countries by six months to June 2021. Their finance chiefs will examine by next spring whether to extend the program by another six months.

The debt relief program, called the Debt Service Suspension Initiative, was launched in May by the G20 and Paris Club of traditional creditor nations after the outbreak of the virus saw vulnerable countries saddled with higher financing

costs.

The second virtual G20 summit under Saudi Arabia’s presidency, following the first in March, came as many countries in Europe and elsewhere have been seeing more virus cases as winter approaches, increasing downside risks to growth recovery and uncertainty over the coming months.

The pandemic has led to strict travel restrictions and hard lockdowns in many cities across the world that have left major economies reeling from annualized contractions of a real 20% 50% in the April-June period from the previous quarter. They sharply recovered in the July-September period but were still behind pre-pandemic levels.

The G20 groups Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Britain, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United States and the European Union.

Saudi Arabia handed over the rotating G-20 presidency to Italy.

Kyodo

Ceylon Chamber of Commerce Organizes Webinar on Taxation and Investment Incentives in Sri Lanka



The Ceylon Chamber of Commerce (CCC) recently conducted a Webinar on Overview of Taxation and

Investment Incentives in Sri Lanka at 10:00 AM LK time on December 17, 2020.

The virtual event featured two experts from KPMG Sri Lanka — Suresh R.I. Perera, Principal of the Tax and Regulatory Division; and Radhini Thomas, who is Senior Manager of the same division. Their presentation was aimed at aiding investors make better investment decisions by helping them understand the taxation and investment incentives offered by Sri Lanka. This was then followed by a brief Q&A session.

Economic recovery 'likely in 2022'

Vaccine development would be the most powerful contributor to a full economic recovery, followed by governments' stimulus policies, UBS Asset Management said, adding that it expects the global economy to return to the levels of before the COVID-19 pandemic by mid-2022.

"We believe that the most powerful determinant of economic recovery will be the development of a still-elusive vaccine or proven treatment protocol," Evan Brown, head of multi-asset allocation strategy at UBS Asset Management, said in a report on November 23.

In addition to breakthroughs in the medical field, public policy decisions would be instrumental in deciding which

character defines the shape of recoveries — be it V, U or swoosh-shaped, Brown said, adding that a swoosh-shaped recovery is most likely in his view.

Investors should prepare for it to take until 2022 to re-establish the economic levels seen at the end of last year, UBS Asset Management said in the report.

Risk assets around the world have enjoyed substantial rallies since late March, but lingering safety concerns would likely keep demand and capacity below pre-pandemic levels until 2022, Brown said of the company's base-case scenario.

There is an upside scenario in which a faster-than-expected arrival of an effective vaccine allows for a



comprehensive economic reopening, with governments turning to stimulus spending, he said.

Capital spending is likely to remain in the doldrums in this highly uncertain backdrop, and the scope for households to reduce saving rates is limited, the report said, adding that recoveries would be gradual but uneven among different countries and sectors.

Taipei Times

FICCI Hosts 93rd Annual Convention, Annual EXPO 2020



The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) recently held their 93rd Annual Convention from December 11 to 14, 2020, and at the same time launched the inaugural edition of the FICCI Annual

EXPO 2020 (FAE 2020).

FICCI's Annual Convention, which this year had "Inspired India" as its theme, is one of the most awaited congregation of leadership from the government, and the industry, who come together for cross fertilization of ideas with a high-powered audience, comprising policymakers, business leaders, media and academics, among others. The Annual Expo 2020 (FAE 2020), meanwhile, is the largest ever virtual exhibition in India, focused on manufacturing and services sectors in conjunction with the convention.

Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the Annual Convention & EXPO on December 12, 2020. Luminaries like Microsoft CEO Mr. Satya Nadella; world-famous entrepreneur, author, innovator and philanthropist Mr. Peter Diamandis; Chairman of Tata Sons Mr. N. Chandrasekaran, Morgan Stanley Head of Emerging Markets and Chief

Global Strategist Mr. Ruchir Sharma, and a host of other eminent global leaders, also attended to share their vision on an "Inspired India."

FICCI's fully secured, virtual event platform BIKE, a global facility for Business, Information, Knowledge and Education, was used to conduct most of the sessions.

The FICCI Annual Expo 2020 (FAE 2020) began on December 11 and will continue for a period of one year, during which buyers and sellers from across the globe would be able connect and interact 24/7, in order to forge new business alliances. Products and services across over 50 sectors were likewise showcased in structured Exhibition Halls, alongside sectoral webinars for global delegates. Registration for EXPO visitors was complimentary, while a nominal fee was charged for exhibitors.

More information about the ongoing FICCI Expo is available at www.ficciexpo.in.

ASEAN Young Entrepreneurs Carnival Held Online for the First Time



The 5th ASEAN Young Entrepreneurs' Carnival was held on November 30 by the Vietnam Young Entrepreneurs' Association (VYEA), as Chair of the ASEAN Young Entrepreneurs' Council in 2020.

This year marks the first time the carnival has been held online via videoconference with the young entrepreneurs' associations of ASEAN countries, with an in-person event in Vietnam.

Vietnam's Deputy Prime Minister Truong Hoa Binh addressed the opening ceremony in Hanoi, saying that ASEAN's young entrepreneurs should intensify international cooperation and seek more customers in the region and the world.

He added that it is necessary for them to promote their dynamism and creativity, step up the application of scientific and technological advances, support youths in disadvantaged areas, and develop the digital economy.

Stressing the importance of connectivity, he also affirmed that the Vietnamese Government pledges to take action to step up connectivity between young ASEAN entrepreneurs.

This year's carnival is of special significance amid the COVID-19 pandemic, according to VYEA President Dang Hong Anh.

Delegates discussed two topics, including the business ecosystem and alliances among young ASEAN entrepreneurs and the roadmap to a digital future.

The VYEA also handed over the ASEAN Young Entrepreneurs' Council chairmanship to the association in Brunei at the carnival.

The ASEAN Young Entrepreneurs' Council was set up in November 2015 at the 27th ASEAN Summit in Malaysia, with the aim of promoting the common voice of the bloc's young entrepreneurs in boosting regional solidarity, and socio-economic and cultural cooperation in the ASEAN Community.

Vietnamplus

ICC Launches 2020 Leaders on Purpose CEO Study

LEADERS — ON PURPOSE

and tomorrow.

Leaders on Purpose conducts in-depth research with purpose-driven CEOs of multi-national corporations. Both the CEOs and researchers involved in the studies represent the vanguard in their field.

The study itself sheds light on how these leaders and their organizations are leveraging their purpose to balance the dual ambitions of business success as well as social and planetary wellbeing. By applying the new business logic, these executives and companies are building the infrastructure and social capital of a new economic model – a purpose-first economy - that can serve as the foundation for economic

The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) has launched the 2020 Leaders on Purpose CEO Study, described as a longitudinal study of the leadership of today

recovery and for a more sustainable future for generations to come. The aim is to quickly bring key insights to change agents and society as a whole, to accelerate learning, collaboration, and implementation.

The 2020 Leaders on Purpose Study was launched on December 16, with an hour-long session that explored: (1) Best Practices for embedding purpose into corporate leadership, strategy, culture and supply/value chains; (2) Ecosystem Reforms to help purpose-driven companies thrive in relation to government policies; and (3) Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships and initiatives building enabling ecosystems for accelerated action towards the COVID-19 rebuild.

The Leaders on Purpose is a community of purpose-driven corporate leaders promoting an inclusive and sustainable economy that puts purpose at its core and leaves no one behind. It collaborates with ICC to pool expertise from the private sector to identify and enable the reforms needed to driving systems transformation towards the post COVID-19 economy.

More information on the study is available [here](#).

WTO Group Publishes Package of Recommendations for MSMEs

The World Trade Organization (WTO) Informal Working Group on Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) has adopted a resolution containing six recommendations and declarations aimed at addressing challenges smaller businesses face when they trade internationally.

Ambassador José Luís Cancela of Uruguay, the Coordinator of the Group, noted that MSMEs often struggle to participate in international trade and have been hit very hard by the current pandemic. He said that by endorsing this package, the Group signals that it stands ready to help them.

Deputy Director-General Yi Xiaozhun, meanwhile, stressed that the package is important for the WTO as it shows that members are willing to compromise and work together to accomplish their goals.

The package includes a set of voluntary and non-binding recommendations covering areas such as transparency and information sharing on MSMEs, trade facilitation, access to finance and cross-border payments, access to market information and inclusion of MSMEs in regulatory developments. It follows on from the Group's declaration at Buenos Aires in 2017, in which they committed to address obstacles that represent a significant burden for MSMEs interested in participating in international trade.

The recommendations and declarations that compose the package include:

1. MSME-related information in WTO Trade Policy Reviews — The recommendation calls on WTO members to provide, on a voluntary basis, information on policies related to MSMEs during their WTO Trade Policy Reviews to enhance transparency and to be a source of good practices (e.g., number of MSMEs in the economy and their share in international trade or programmes that support MSMEs to



- trade).
2. Access to information — Members are encouraged to support the Global Trade Helpdesk, a tool led by the International Trade Centre, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the WTO to help MSMEs access market intelligence, including on tariffs and regulations.
3. Trade facilitation for MSMEs — Burdensome customs procedures are especially hard on MSMEs. The Group is calling on WTO members to fully implement the WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement, exchange experiences to identify and promote good practices that can help MSMEs, and consider adopting digital customs procedures to ease these difficulties.
4. Promoting MSME inclusion in regulatory development — New trade regulations can have unintended consequences for businesses, especially for MSMEs. Members are encouraged to analyse potential impacts for smaller businesses and consult with MSMEs before implementing new trade regulations.
5. Supporting implementation of the 2019 Decision on the WTO Integrated Database — The Integrated Database (IDB) is the WTO's official source of tariff and trade-related information. By keeping the IDB up to date, WTO members can help MSMEs access reliable and comprehensive information on tariffs and other market access data. This recommendation supports the

voluntary submission of additional information and automatic electronic transmission of members' tariff or import data to the IDB as per the May 2019 IDB Decision.

6. Access to finance and cross-border payments — Access to finance and cross-border payments are major challenges for the engagement of MSMEs in trade. The Group calls on members to share best practices with a view to identifying concrete measures.

VCCI launches website to support businesses amid pandemic

The Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) launched a website on December 8 that targets forging strong business connections.

It provides information on current government support packages for businesses affected by Covid-19 by industry and location.

Businesses can report difficulties related to accessing the packages to both central and local authorities.

"We expect businesses, especially small and micro enterprises and households -- the most vulnerable group affected by Covid-19 -- to benefit from the website," a VCCI spokesperson said.

A VCCI survey on the impact of Covid-19 on businesses found that small and micro enterprises, businesses in agriculture and those situated in disadvantaged areas are most severely affected. They make up around 90% of the country's 800,000 active enterprises.

Due to resource constraints, this group often struggles to access government support policies, and is prevented from making use of



News Updates

opportunities to maintain production and run the business and report problems to authorities.

According to the Business Registration Department, in the first 11 months more than 44,440 enterprises suspended operations, 91.1 percent of them with capital of up to VND10 billion.

The number of enterprises seeking to close permanently is 30,213, 89.9% of them having capital of up to VND10 billion.

VCCI News



FBCCI Launches Tech Center to Boost SMEs

The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) has launched the FBCCI Tech Center (FBCCI Tech-C), which will provide the necessary technical policy services to FBCCI member organizations and facilitate entrepreneurial activities.

Bangladesh Education Minister

Dr. Dipu Moni and State Minister for Information and Communication Technology Mr. Zunaid Ahmed Palak were among those present at the launching ceremony for the Center on December 6, 2020.

FBCCI President Sheikh Fazle Fahim, a Vice President of CACCI, had initiated the proposal of the Center. According to him, it will promote startups and create tech entrepreneurs in Bangladesh who can build a digital ecosystem, solve the social problems of the masses, demonstrate explosive

growth, and show measurable and transformative impact. It will also highlight the role of technology in the economy and advocate policy solutions that drive economic growth, spur innovation, and create jobs.

As a platform for imparting deep tech skills to startups, FBCCI Tech-C has signed agreements with international organizations like the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the U.S., Accelerating Asia in Singapore, as well as Seneca College and the University of Toronto in Canada.

Manufacturing to benefit from virus vaccines: TIER



The climate gauge for the nation's manufacturing industry is expected to turn "green" next year from "yellow-blue," as vaccines could help the world emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Taiwan Institute of Economic Research (TIER) said on December 2.

Electronics suppliers would continue to benefit from low-contract business opportunities, as it would take a while for most people to be vaccinated,

the institute said.

The Taipei-based institute seeks to project the health of the manufacturing sector using a five-color system with "green" indicating steady growth, "red" suggesting overheating and "blue" signaling a recession. Dual colors indicate a transition.

The pandemic has also been weighing on end-market demand for most electronics, with the exception of data centers, PCs and devices used in online services, it said, adding that smartphone sales might gain better momentum next year with the launch of faster 5G services.

The business climate for all other manufacturing sectors would remain yellow-blue, the institute said. Renewed lockdowns in Europe would

put pressure on the recovery of the automotive aftermarket business by slowing demand for auto parts.

Demand for chemical and plastic products might pick up on the back of a global economic improvement, but increased supply from Chinese peers could create a supply glut, the institute said.

Furniture and textile product makers would gain support from property development and public infrastructure projects, but a strong New Taiwan dollar might erode profitability for petrochemical materials, it said.

Taiwan's exclusion from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership — signed by 15 Asia-Pacific nations on Nov. 15 — would add uncertainty to the nation's business outlook, the institute said, adding that metal product makers would face similar challenges.

Taipei Times

Pandemic sending emergency aid needs soaring: UN



The UN on December 1 said that US\$35 billion would be needed for aid next year, as the COVID-19 pandemic leaves tens of millions more people in crisis, and with the risk of multiple famines looming.

The world body's annual Global Humanitarian Overview estimated that 235 million people worldwide would need some form of emergency assistance next year — a staggering 40% increase in the past year.

"The increase arises almost entirely because of COVID-19," UN Undersecretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock told reporters.

Next year, one in 33 people worldwide would be in need of aid, the report found, saying that if all of them lived in one country, it would be the world's fifth-largest nation.

The annual appeal by UN agencies and other humanitarian organizations usually presents a depressing

picture of soaring needs brought on by conflicts, displacement, natural disasters and climate change. However, the pandemic, which has killed more than 1.45 million people worldwide, has disproportionately hit those "already living on a knife's edge."

"The picture we are presenting is the bleakest and darkest perspective on humanitarian need in the period ahead that we have ever set out," Lowcock said.

The money requested in the appeal would be enough to help 160 million of the most vulnerable people across 56 countries.

For the first time since the 1990s, extreme poverty is set to rise, life expectancy will fall and the annual death toll from HIV, tuberculosis and malaria could potentially double.

"Possibly the most alarming thing ... is the threat of the return of famines, potentially in multiple locations," Lowcock said.

By the end of this year, the number of acutely food-insecure people worldwide could swell to as much as 270 million — an 82% increase over the pre-pandemic number.

Conditions in Yemen, Burkina Faso, South Sudan and northeastern Nigeria indicated they are already on the brink of famine, while a range of other countries and regions, including Afghanistan and the Sahel, were also "potentially very vulnerable," Lowcock said. "If we get through 2021 without major famines, that will be a significant achievement."

Raising the full amount at a time of global economic crisis could be a daunting task, but while the total seemed high, it was tiny compared with what wealthy countries are pumping in to rescue their tanking economies, Lowcock said.

AFP

Too Many New Businesses are Necessity-driven in South Korea: KCCI

The Korea Chamber of Commerce and Industry said in a report on December 13 that the private sector's contribution to South Korea's GDP growth dropped from 3.6% to 0.4% from 2011 to 2019 and this is because of stagnation on the enterprise side in particular.

"When it comes to the list of global top 100 enterprises, Samsung Electronics is currently the only South Korean enterprise on the list whereas 37 U.S., 18 Chinese and eight Japanese are found on that list," the chamber explained, adding, "Besides, nine U.S., 11 Chinese and five Japanese joined the list as newcomers between 2011 and this year whereas the number is zero for South Korea."

The chamber also mentioned the ratio of self-made entrepreneurs. "According to Forbes World's Billionaire, the ratio of self-made entrepreneurs with US\$1 billion or more

in assets to those with the same amount of assets stands at 57.1% in South Korea whereas it is as high as 70% in the United States, 98% in China, 87% in the United Kingdom and 81% in Japan and the global average is 69.7%," it said.

The chamber pointed out that starting a business in South Korea is also problematic. "In the first half of this year, tech startups accounted for just 14.4% of new business foundation in South Korea and the ratio fell 2.1 percentage points in four years," it said, continuing, "At present, 62.3% of business initiation and 65.8% of business discontinuation are occurring in real estate, restaurant, wholesale and retail businesses, which are for a living, while opportunity-driven entrepreneurship is dwindling."

Business Korea

Developing Asia to Contract 0.4% in 2020, Grow by 6.8% in 2021

Economic activity in developing Asia is forecast to contract by 0.4% this year, before picking up to 6.8% in 2021 as the region moves toward recovery from the effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, according to a report released by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on December 10.

The new growth forecast, presented in a regular supplement to the Asian Development Outlook (ADO) 2020 Update, is an improvement from the -0.7% gross domestic product (GDP) growth forecast in September, while the outlook for 2021 remains unchanged. But prospects are diverging within the region, with East Asia set to grow this year while other subregions are contracting.

"The outlook for developing Asia is showing improvement. Growth projections have been upgraded for the People's Republic of China (PRC) and India, the region's two largest economies," said ADB Chief Economist Yasuyuki Sawada. "A prolonged pandemic remains the primary risk, but recent developments on the vaccine front are tempering this. Safe, effective, and timely vaccine delivery in developing economies will be critical to support the reopening of economies and the recovery of growth in the region."

Pandemic-induced lockdowns and restrictions have been eased in varying levels in the region, with merchandise exports rebounding quickly from substantial declines in the second quarter. Mobility is also returning to pre-COVID-19 levels in East Asia and the Pacific, where the spread of COVID-19 has largely been contained or prevented in recent months. A recovery in tourism, however, is likely to be delayed.

Most of developing Asia's subregions are forecast to contract this year. East Asia is the exception, with an upgraded growth forecast of 1.6% for 2020 on the back of faster than expected recoveries in the PRC and Taipei. East Asia's growth outlook for 2021 is



maintained at 7.0%.

South Asia's GDP is forecast to contract by 6.1% in 2020, revised up from the 6.8% contraction expected in September. Growth in South Asia is forecast to rebound to 7.2% in 2021. The growth forecast for India, the subregion's largest economy, for fiscal year (FY) 2020 is raised to -8.0%, from the -9.0% projection in September, while outlook for FY2021 is kept at 8.0%.

Economic growth in Southeast Asia remains under pressure as COVID-19 outbreaks and containment measures continue, particularly in

Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. The subregion's growth forecast for 2020 is revised down to -4.4% from -3.8% in September. The subregion's outlook for 2021 is also downgraded, with Southeast Asia now expected to grow 5.2% next year compared to the 5.5% growth forecast in September.

The outlook for the Pacific is unchanged for both 2020 and 2021 at -6.1% and 1.3%, respectively. Central Asia's growth forecast for 2020 remains at -2.1%, but outlook for 2021 is slightly downgraded to 3.8% from the 3.9% growth projection in September.

Regional inflation is expected to marginally ease to 2.8% in 2020, from the 2.9% projected in September, due to depressed demand and low oil prices. Inflation for 2021 is forecast at 1.9%, down from 2.3% forecast in September. Oil prices are retained at \$42.50 per barrel in 2020 before increasing to \$50.00 per barrel in 2021.

ADB News Release

PCCI wants accelerated CREATE enactment

The Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) is calling for the enactment into law before the end of the year of the Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises (CREATE) bill to immediately reap the benefits of this key reform.

PCCI president Amb. Benedicto Yujuico made this call at the group's annual general meeting after the Senate passed the bill weeks earlier.

PCCI sees CREATE and other initiatives as part of an overall fiscal and economic stimulus program that will help industries get back on their feet.

Secretary Carlos Dominguez of the Department of Finance had earlier expressed hope that CREATE will be submitted for the President's



PCCI President Amb. Benedicto Yujuico

signature in December. "This will allow taxpayers to properly adjust their books and returns for the filing season as the reduction of the CIT (corporate income



tax) rate (to 25% from 30%) will be retroactively applied to July 1 of this year," he said.

Dominguez said the Senate's timely passage of the CREATE bill will provide businesses with one of the largest economic stimulus measures in the country's history to help them recover from the economic turmoil caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Yujuico, however, said even with a lot of economic activities already allowed, businesses continue to face an uncertain future. "Yet, despite the uncertainty, there is good to be learned from our experience," he said, adding the pandemic forced many of enterprises to adopt innovative measures to adapt and to recover.

"Some of the MSMEs (micro, small and medium enterprises) in the non-essential industries were agile enough to be able to operate even within the confines of our homes, working online, accelerating the process of digitalization, automation and the adoption of new ways of doing business with better technology. However, plenty have not been so lucky, losing their customers and shutting their doors," Yujuico added.

Malaya



The memo – A High Standard Outcome to Power the Post-COVID Recovery – states that the digital economy will have an even more critical role to play in ensuring a rapid post-pandemic recovery, and highlights five key areas in which global business prioritises actions by negotiators:

1. Market access and connectivity, including common rules to ensure open, non-discriminatory access to digital and digitally-enabled markets that support competition.
2. A permanent prohibition of customs duties on electronic transmissions to ensure that duties do not impede the flow of data, and disciplines on the localisation of data.
3. New disciplines, building on the Trade Facilitation Agreement, to enable simplified processing of low value shipments, and a provision mandating the adoption and implementation of the UNCITRAL Model Law on Electronic Transferable Records to enable paperless trade at scale.
4. Commitments on cross-border consumer protection, including a commitment on a data protection framework that embodies minimum best practice standards.
5. Capacity building programmes to expand connectivity, bridge digital divides and assist micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) looking to grow through e-commerce.

ICC Secretary-General John W.H. Denton AO said: "Negotiators have made good progress on some of the less controversial issues. It's now time to deliver an agreement that will power a post-COVID recovery and ensure the continued success of the millions of businesses that have come to rely on the digital economy."

Trade Agreement on E-commerce Essential to Power Post-COVID Economy: ICC



In a memo to World Trade Organization Members participating in the Joint Statement Initiative on E-commerce (JSI), the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) has called on negotiators to accelerate progress and conclude a high

standard agreement by the next WTO Ministerial Conference.

There are now 86 World Trade Organization (WTO) Members negotiating the JSI, representing well over 90% of world trade. Citing the indispensable role of the digital economy during COVID-19, the memo says:

"As communities have socially distanced to flatten the curve, contactless payments have enabled safe, COVID-free transactions; brick-and-mortar retailers have rapidly moved to sell their wares online, powered by a vibrant ecosystem of software as a service providers; citizens have used social media to maintain connection with friends and loved ones across the globe; and e-commerce marketplaces have provided consumers with safety, choice and convenience."

ICC/WCF Releases Survey Results on Regional Priorities



The ICC World Chambers Federation (ICC/WCF) recently issued the results of its ICC/WCF Regional Action Networks surveys on the thematic priorities identified by ICC National Committees and WCF Chambers from each region.

The inputs from the different regions will be used to guide the ICC/WCF in shaping the agenda of the ICC/WCF Regional Action Networks, which are newly-created action groups that will be expected to play a great role in bringing ICC National Committees and Chambers closer together and increase the collective impact of the ICC/WCF global network around shared priorities.

Based on the survey results, the top priorities identified for the respective regions are:

- Sub Sahara Africa – Trade Facilitation, Agri-food, Digital Trade, Sustainability
- Asia Pacific – Digital Trade, Entrepreneurship, Health
- Europe – Digital Trade, Sustainability, Finance
- Latin America and Caribbean – Digital Trade, Health, Tourism, Entrepreneurship
- Middle East and North Africa – International financial cooperation, Sustainability, Tourism

Globally, the top priorities are as follows: (a) Digital trade; (b) Sustainability; (c) Entrepreneurship; (d) and Finance

The specific priorities proposed include the following:

- **Health:** Promote equitable access to critical health tools for fighting Covid-19 vaccines, therapeutics, diagnostics – including championing participation in the WHO's Access to Covid-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator programme
- **Finance:** Enhance business access to cost-effective finance to support international trade
- **Trade:** Identify and champion priority customs reforms to promote facilitation commerce
- **Agri-food:** Promote interventions and investment to build agricultural capacity and ensure food security

- **Digital trade:** Promote policy reforms to enable paperless trading, effective SME digitization and cross-border e-commerce
- **Entrepreneurship:** Develop tailored tools and projects to promote entrepreneurship, including startups and micro-businesses
- **Sustainability:** Provide tools and support to SMEs to adopt sustainable business practices and, in doing so, gain a competitive advantage in global markets (e.g., SME Climate Hub, ICC// UNDP Covid-19 Facility)
- **Tourism:** Develop tools and advocacy to restore global mobility and tourism (e.g., ICC AOK Pass)

Respondents from Asia-Pacific region further noted that Covid-19 has exacerbated the Digital Divide among nations as well within country borders. Hence, they suggested that international action needs to be taken to mitigate this.

NZ Businesses Gaining Confidence in the Lead up to Christmas



The results of the latest Central New Zealand business confidence survey show a gain in confidence in the business community after what has been a difficult year, says the Wellington Chamber of Commerce and Business Central.

"Overall, businesses' confidence has improved significantly quarter-on-quarter and while there is still room for improvement in some areas, we can say that businesses are the most optimistic they have been all year," says John Milford, Chief Executive of the Wellington Chamber of Commerce and Business Central.

"Confidence in all three areas had improved considerably from the last survey in August. Businesses' confidence in the New Zealand economy is at net negative 8% (up from net negative 61%), confidence in the regional economy is at net positive 8% (up from net negative 73%) and businesses' confidence in their own business is at net positive 22% (up from net negative 7%).

"It is good to see confidence levels up. Although with Christmas around the corner and the holidays to look forward to, there is typically a bump in confidence levels.

"We would also say that the improvement in



News Updates

confidence across the board is due to several other factors. With the elections out of the way and the Labour party receiving a majority of the vote, there is some clarity around the direction of the government. New Zealand's ability to resume activities at level one restrictions and news of successful vaccine trials will also give businesses hope that the border will soon be open."

"But there are areas to improve on. When we asked members what barriers or issues they are currently facing, nearly a third (32%) of respondents referenced staffing issues, 17% made references to the border closures.

"The two top issues businesses are facing are inherently linked. We listen when our members speak to us and it is not low skilled labour that is the major problem, it is specialist skills that are required, but not readily available in New Zealand.

"Businesses are having issues fixing and certifying equipment, training new staff, or growing their businesses because they can't get critical employees across the border and into quarantine facilities. The problem is growing and is already affecting the New Zealand economy."

The latest business confidence survey, compiled by across the Wellington Regional Chambers of Commerce and Business Central, was conducted during a 15-day period between the 16th and 30th of November. The quarterly survey was sent to Wellington Regional Chambers of Commerce and Business Central members across New Zealand - from Gisborne and New Plymouth down to Nelson. There was a total of 237 responses. The next quarterly business confidence survey will take place in March 2021.

Wellington Chamber of Commerce

TEEMA Holds 2020 Global Networking Forum



The Taiwan Electrical and Electronic Manufacturers' Association (TEEMA) held the 2020 Global Networking Forum in Taipei on December 18, 2020, that focused on Mexico, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and the European Union (EU) as investment destinations for Taiwanese businesses.

According to TEEMA Chairman Richard Lee, the global supply chain was greatly disrupted this year by the US-China trade dispute and the COVID-19 pandemic, and that it

becoming fragmented is an "inevitable trend."

He noted that, "It is advantageous to manufacture as close to the market as possible in multiple locations, rather than rely on a central supply chain." With the one-day forum, TEEMA hopes to improve trade relations and promote formal agreements between Taiwan companies and the featured countries.

The morning session discussed investment opportunities in Mexico, which is touted as especially promising given its strategic location near the U.S., Canada, and South America. Mexican business representatives who joined the discussion have also mentioned a young and skilled workforce, large market size, and legal incentives as several advantages to investing in the country. The US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) coming into effect last July 2020 likewise means Mexico is a good entry point into the US market.

For the afternoon session, the initial discussion centered around business opportunities in the Czech Republic, with perspectives from the Electrical and Electronic Association of the Czech Republic, the Czech Taiwanese Business Chamber, and representatives from Taiwanese company Wistron's Czech factory.

This was followed by a forum on business opportunities in Slovakia, which sought insights and experiences from the Slovak Investment and Trade Development Agency (SARIO) and representatives from the Slovakia branch of Delta Electronics.

The final forum of the day discussed investment opportunities in the EU, with one particular talk centering on the "Taiwan and EU Industrial Innovation Link Experience."

Member Personalities

Cambodia Chamber of Commerce President Kith Meng donates \$3 million for COVID-19 vaccine

Kith Meng, president of the Cambodia Chamber of Commerce, a Primary Member of the Confederation of Asia-Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CACCI), and Chairman and CEO of The Royal Group, along with his wife Mao Chamnan, have contributed \$3 million to the government to purchase COVID-19 vaccines for the Cambodian people.



Following Prime Minister Hun Sen's announcement that he had ordered the Health and Finance ministries to allocate money and purchase COVID-19 vaccine doses, Meng, on his official Facebook page, said "My family and I are honoured to support the mission of [Mr] Hun Sen in winning against COVID-19."

"We hope our donation of \$3 million for the purchase of COVID-19 vaccines helps many of our fellow Cambodian people," he added.

Hun Sen responded to Meng's generous donation by thanking him in a public letter. "The contribution of \$3,000,000 donated... is very valuable and will be used to purchase vaccines to prevent COVID-19 and to protect the lives of our Cambodian people," he said.

Meng and his wife have previously come forward to provide humanitarian assistance during times of need. He and his wife contributed \$200,000 to assist the Cambodian



Kith Meng (rightmost) and wife Mao Chamnan (2nd from right) show humanitarian support with Cambodian Red Cross president Bun Rany (leftmost) and Prime Minister Hun Sen (2nd from left)

government in rescue efforts when the country was hit by floods in October. The couple contributed \$500,000 in March to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, and another \$500,000 in May to the Cambodian Red Cross.

The business leader also donated a much-needed \$3 million to Phnom Penh's Calmette Hospital in December last year for its modernisation programme and provided a plot of land worth roughly \$8.6 million to Kantha Bopha Children's Hospital in Phnom Penh, where the non-profit hospital's cardiac surgery centre was built.

Khmer Times

Henry Kao reelected Chairman of CIECA



Mr. Henry C.S. Kao will be serving as Chairman of the Chinese International Economic Cooperation Association (CIECA) for another 4-year term, after being reelected to a second tenure last December 9, 2020.

Mr. Kao is currently a Vice President of CACCI. He also serves as Chairman of I-Mei Foods; Supervisor of Taishin International Bank; Honorary Chairman of the Chinese National Association of Industry and Commerce (CNAIC). He holds an M.A. in Public Administration from the University of San Francisco.

Ian Tarutia is new PNGCCI President



Mr. Ian Tarutia, OBE has been elected President of the Papua New Guinea Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PNGCCI).

Mr. Tarutia assumed the position of President on December 4, 2020, taking over the role from John Leahy. He previously served as Vice President of the Chamber

for the last several years.

He also serves as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Nasfund, Papua New Guinea's largest industry fund for professionals in the private sector and government-owned corporations. He is a career officer with over 30 years of superannuation administration experience, initially serving as Joint CEO of Nasfund since July 2007 before taking over as sole CEO on 1st November 2011.

Member Personalities

Ray Sputore is ACCI President



Ray Sputore is currently President of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI). He has over 46 years of professional, corporate, and business experience, having served as General Manager of the Transfield Group of companies, Leighton

Contractors, and the Decmil Group.

Mr. Sputore is the past President and Chairperson of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia (CCIWA), and still a current director. He is also chair of the CCIWA's Construction Infrastructure Forum and a current member of the Main Roads West Australian Road Resource, Construction and Maintenance Industry Advisory Group. Additionally, Ray is a current trustee director of United Super (Cbus) and a director of the West Australian State Training board.

Special Features

RCEP: A New Trade Agreement That Will Shape Global Economics and Politics

By Peter A. Petri, Brandeis International Business School & Michael Plummer, John Hopkins

On November 15, 2020, 15 countries — members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and five regional partners — signed the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), arguably the largest free trade agreement in history. RCEP and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), which concluded in 2018 and is also dominated by East Asian members, are the only major multilateral free trade agreements signed in the Trump era.

India and the United States were to be members of RCEP and the CPTPP, respectively, but withdrew. As the agreements are now configured (see Figure 1), they forcefully stimulate intra-East Asian integration around China and Japan. This is partly the result of U.S. policies. The United States needs to rebalance its economic and security strategies to advance not only its economic interests, but also its security goals.

RCEP'S Economic Significance

RCEP will connect about 30% of the world's people and output and, in the right political context, will generate significant gains. According to computer simulations we recently published, RCEP could add \$209 billion annually to world incomes and \$500 billion to world trade by 2030.

We also estimate that RCEP and CPTPP together will offset global losses from the U.S.-China trade war, although not for China and the United States. The new agreements will make the economies of North and Southeast Asia more efficient, linking their strengths in technology, manufacturing, agriculture and natural resources.

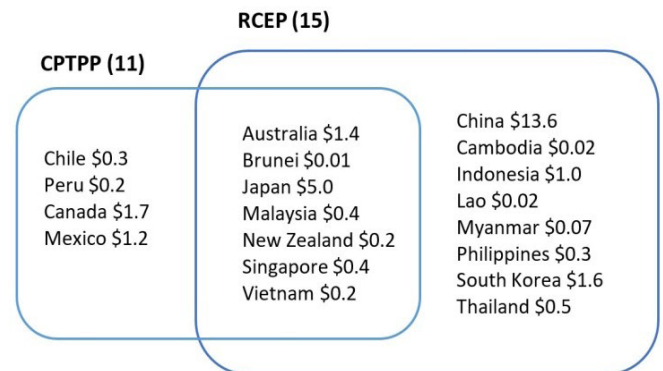


Figure 1: Members of RCEP and CPTPP (Note: Numbers present 2018 GDP in trillions of U.S. dollars)

The effects of RCEP are impressive even though the agreement is not as rigorous as the CPTPP. It incentivizes supply chains across the region but also caters to political sensitivities. Its intellectual property rules add little to what many members have in place, and the agreement says nothing at all about labor, the environment or state-owned enterprises — all key chapters in the CPTPP. However, ASEAN-centered trade agreements tend to improve over time.

Southeast Asia will benefit significantly from RCEP (\$19 billion annually by 2030) but less so than Northeast Asia because it already has free trade agreements with RCEP partners. But RCEP could improve access to Chinese Belt



Special Features

and Road Initiative (BRI) funds, enhancing gains from market access by strengthening transport, energy and communications links. RCEP's favorable rules of origin will also attract foreign investment.

RCEP'S Geopolitical Significance

RCEP, often labelled inaccurately as "China-led," is a triumph of ASEAN's middle-power diplomacy. The value of a large, East Asian trade agreement has long been recognized, but neither China nor Japan, the region's largest economies, were politically acceptable as architects for the project. The stalemate was resolved in 2012 by an ASEAN-brokered deal that included India, Australia and New Zealand as members and put ASEAN in charge of negotiating the agreement. Without such "ASEAN centrality," RCEP might never have been launched.

To be sure, RCEP will help China strengthen its relations with neighbors, rewarding eight years of patient negotiations in the "ASEAN way," which participants typically describe, with varying degrees of affection, as unusually slow, consensual and flexible.

RCEP will also accelerate Northeast Asian economic integration. A spokesperson for Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted last year that negotiations on the trilateral China-South Korea-Japan free trade agreement, which has been stuck for many years, will become active "as soon as they are able to conclude the negotiation on RCEP." As if on cue, in a high-profile speech in early November, President Xi Jinping promised to "speed up negotiations on a China-EU investment treaty and a China-Japan-ROK [South Korea] free trade agreement."

Finally, RCEP and the CPTPP are powerful counterexamples to the global decline in rules-based trade. If RCEP spurs mutually beneficial growth, its members, including China, will gain influence across the world.

America's Options

U.S. policies in Asia need to adjust to the changing realities of East Asia, recognizing the increased role of China, maturing ASEAN integration and America's diminished relative economic influence.

Looking back, the U.S. government's Asia policies during the Trump administration focused on a new Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) vision. As experts have noted, the principles of FOIP — an open, inclusive, peaceful region



— were consistent with established U.S. policy. But the administration's tactics then emphasized isolating China from regional economic networks and prioritized security arrangements centered on the Quad (Australia, India, Japan and the United States).

Meanwhile, FOIP's economic dimensions remained

secondary, ranging from modest investments and a plan to exclude China from supply chains to rating infrastructure projects often funded by China. The U.S. approach antagonized ASEAN and other East Asian friends, forcing countries into unnecessary and risky political choices.

Looking ahead, one U.S. option is to continue FOIP in current form with greater multilateral support. The approach of President Donald Trump — minus inflammatory rhetoric — has support in Congress and even in some ASEAN countries like Vietnam. Yet the approach risks sidelining the United States while economic arrangements like RCEP, CPTPP and BRI continue to grow. Without an economic pillar, FOIP will still push countries to choose between economic and security interests.

A second U.S. option is to re-engage fully in regional economic networks alongside an active security role. For example, the United States could join the CPTPP and advocate its rapid enlargement to Indonesia, the Philippines, South Korea, Thailand and the United Kingdom. U.S. markets and technology make such arrangements attractive and, in the long run, might persuade China to join (we estimate big gains if it does). But current U.S. politics appears to offer little support for this approach.

A third U.S. option is to emphasize intensified soft-power engagement combined with narrow but firm security commitments. This approach would build on U.S. strengths and buy time for more ambitious initiatives. It would emphasize vigorous participation in regional forums, people-to-people exchanges, principled advocacy of rules-based trade and a clearly articulated military presence. It would benefit from supportive U.S.-China understandings, no mean feat in the current context.

Brink News

Special Features

From small businesses to farmers, middle India is driving demand

By Aditi Shah, and Rajendra Jadhav, Reuters

Manish Mehra, owner of Washex Hospitality, an industrial laundry service, recently flew from Delhi to Jodhpur, a city in north-western India, to win a contract to service a large, government-run hospital - a move essential to kickstarting his business.

"For a new relationship it is essential to know each other before you can establish the trust and confidence to work online and that need is higher in case of government departments," said Mehra, who had to stay for a week in a Jodhpur hotel.

Increased demand for air travel and hotel stays by small business owners like Mehra, accompanied by a rise in rural incomes and spending after two good monsoons, is helping the pandemic-hit Indian economy slowly recover.

Government data released in November showed the economy shrank 7.5% in the July-September quarter, performing better than analysts' expectation of an 8.8% contraction as lockdowns were eased and some pent-up demand was met. In the April-June period, the economy shrank 23.9%.

Annual growth of 3.4% in farm sector and 0.6% in manufacturing during the September quarter has raised hopes of an early recovery and some service sectors such as trade, hotels and transport contracted at a much slower pace compared with the April-June period.

Farmers, benefiting from a bumper crop, are lapping up tractors while demand for personal vehicles, due to a lack of public transport and the need for safer travel options, has boosted sales of cars and motorcycles. There has also been an uptick in goods and services, tax collections and higher energy consumption.

A recovery is taking shape and it has been led by the manufacturing sector which has moved from near annihilation in the July quarter to rebound mode, said Yuvika Singhal, an economist at QuantEco Research.

"Until there is a stronger recovery in high contact service sectors, which make up 60% of the GDP, agriculture and manufacturing are expected to carry the growth," said Singhal, adding that India is still growing on a lower GDP base and it will take more than a year to recover lost output.

Slow Start for Hotels, Airlines

A string of Marriot hotels in industrial towns like Sriperumbudur, Visakhapatnam and Nasik are operating at 50% to 60% occupancy with the bulk of guests working with domestic manufacturing companies, said Ashish Jakhanwala,



CEO of hospitality firm SAMHI which owns the properties.

Meanwhile SAMHI's hotel in the tech-city of Bengaluru, that mainly depends on large corporates, is filling only 20% to 30% of rooms.

"Demand from large corporates and international travel will take longer to recover. Hotels catering to public sector and infrastructure companies are doing better," said Jakhanwala.

Since the end of May, when the government lifted a ban on flights, monthly domestic passenger traffic has more than doubled from 2 million in June to over 5 million in October. But that is still down from about 12 million a year ago.

India's biggest carrier IndiGo and rival Vistara are seeing an uptick in business travel but to a much smaller extent than before. "Much of it is from small and medium enterprises (SMEs) or small business owners who cannot afford to sit at home," said Vinod Kannan, chief commercial officer at Vistara, a joint venture between Singapore Airlines and Tata Group.

SMEs have contributed to a 35% to 40% recovery in hotel bookings compared with pre-COVID times and between 27% and 32% recovery in flights, according to online travel agency MakeMyTrip.

Rural Revival Robust

In the hinterlands, the impact of COVID-19 has not been as severe as in the big cities and farmers have benefited from good rainfall for two consecutive years leading to a bumper harvest and adequate conditions for winter-sown crops. This is driving up sales for tractor makers like Mahindra & Mahindra.

Lack of adequate and safe public transport in small towns and villages has also pushed up demand for cars and motorcycles.

Maruti Suzuki, India's biggest carmaker, had a 10% growth in rural sales between July and September versus a 4% rise overall, led by small, entry-level models, said Shashank Srivastava, executive director, marketing and sales.

"While Bharat (rural India) is leading India in terms of a recovery, it cannot carry India," he said, adding that steady, long-term demand will depend on improving economic factors, growing incomes and a rebound in urban markets.

Reuters

Asian Council on Health and Education

Startups Lead the Way in Remote Learning



Taiwan has controlled the coronavirus pandemic so well that its K-12 schools have been able to maintain classroom instruction. The only interruption to school came in February, when the government delayed the start of the spring semester by two weeks as a precautionary measure.

For Taiwanese children and their families, safely maintaining classroom instruction during the worst pandemic in a century is a boon. Concerns exist, though. If remote learning becomes a larger part of education in the future, Taiwan may be at a disadvantage.

That's where Taiwan's online learning startups come in. Many cater to adults learning independently online, but they can also cooperate with businesses and the public sector.

In April, Taiwan's government invited Hahow, a Taipei-based interdisciplinary online education platform, to co-produce a free 48-minute video course that explains in layman's terms what the coronavirus is and how people can protect themselves from it. Former Vice President Chen Chien-jen, an epidemiologist who led the crucial early stage of Taiwan's fight against COVID-19, teaches the course. He speaks in Chinese, with subtitles in English.

The course was a big hit, attracting 20,000 new users to Hahow, says the company's co-founder and CEO Arnold Chiang. "We want to show that



learning can be very diverse," he says. "It doesn't have to be academic."

Typically, Hahow's content is paid, relying on crowdfunding to ensure that there is sufficient interest for a course. If at least 50 students are willing to pay for a given course, Hahow will produce it and make it available online. Chiang says that Hahow is the first company in Taiwan to combine online learning with crowdfunding.

Hahow has grown steadily on the back of its diverse course content, which teaches everything from presentation skills and how to apply for a job overseas to balloon art and drawing cartoons. Courses are taught by non-traditional instructors with expertise in the respective course areas. The company earned US\$5.5 million in revenue last year and expects further growth in 2020.

In Hahow's courses, "Taiwanese can discover what interests them and what they are good at," Chiang says. Because of Taiwan's conservative education system, which is laser-focused on achieving high test scores, "many Taiwanese don't know what they like."

While Hahow has grown during the pandemic, competition is intensifying. Chiang says that since February, two or three new e-learning companies have been set up in Taiwan every month.

Johnny Tsai, co-founder and CEO of VoiceTube, an e-learning platform that uses YouTube videos for instruction, says that his company's sales are up about 20% annually, compared to 200% a year earlier. Amid tougher competition, VoiceTube's user acquisition costs have

tripled as measured by spending on search engine optimization, advertising, and social media.

Established in 2013, VoiceTube initially focused on online English-language instruction. Recently, it has diversified into other languages, business topics, and computer programming. VoiceTube has a library of 100,000 videos from which students can choose. An algorithm helps them select content best tailored to their interests.

This year, its best-selling courses have been the Vclass series taught by local influencers. VoiceTube co-produces content with the influencers and shares revenue with them. The courses focus on building practical English skills in a short period of time (typically 8 to 52 hours) and cover topics such as essential communication, grammar, and TOEIC vocabulary, as well as English used in business and the news media.

With more than three million users in Taiwan, VoiceTube has a solid local following. It has another 400,000 users in Japan, its largest international market. VoiceTube is also present in Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Vietnam.

Within Taiwan, Tsai sees one especially promising new market: schools. VoiceTube is currently discussing cooperation with 30 different educational institutions.

Taiwanese schools have a much greater interest in online services now than before the pandemic, he says. "Taiwan was fortunate that it did not have to widely implement remote learning this time. But that day may come, and schools want to be prepared."

AmCham Taipei

Product & Service Councils

Asian Council on Water, Energy, and Environment

Taiwan Turns Plastic Waste in the Caribbean into Big Brand Apparel

The Caribbean countries of Haiti and Honduras have long coastlines and coral reefs. What was once a diving paradise has long turned into a sea of plastic waste.

Now, plastic bottles are being collected by local women, recycled and then made into clothing, which helps the disadvantaged and victims of domestic abuse. In this way, ocean waste has become a sort of new hope for the women of Haiti and Honduras.

Sea of Plastic, Taiwan Flexes Technological Might

At the 2019 Taipei International Textiles Fair, fabrics made from plastic bottles collected in the Caribbean was front and center on display.

"This is fabric material from a partnership between New Wide and First Mile, a UK-based recycling company. The raw materials originate from recycled plastic bottles from Haiti and Honduras," says Yen-ling Shao, senior vice president of marketing for New Wide International.

Giving new life to recycled ocean waste is an emerging global trend.

Unlike pure recycling, this is the symbiosis of business and public service. Yen-ling Shao relates that First Mile established a foundation to help local women that have suffered abuse, entered early marriages, and have been undereducated to obtain loans, encourage them to recycle plastic bottles, then turn the fabric into clothing for sale. The more clothes they sell, the more people they can help.

After the bottles are collected together, they are compressed into bricks, loaded onto cargo ships, a month later, they arrive in Taiwan. Next, the bottles are shredded, washed, sorted, granulated, and then transformed



back into materials to make bottles or yarn material for textiles. While it may appear simple, the process incorporates considerable technical know-how.

"Recycled bottles must be purified and free of toxins to conform with food container regulations," said Hsiu-chun Chien, director of public affairs and communications at Swire Coca-Cola Beverages Ltd., Taiwan, a customer of Taiwanese recycled bottles.

Coke and Famous Sports Brands Place Orders

Taiwan is capable of turning marine garbage into recycled materials that do not take a back seat to virgin raw materials. Not only can it be made into clothes, but also into food containers. For example, Coca-Cola bottles in Hong Kong and Australia are made with recycled materials from Taiwan.

But this is just the first step, followed by various processes. International brands are loyal customers not simply out of compassion for the disadvantaged, but also the secret embodied in the technology.

For example, to produce colorful, bright and relatively environmentally friendly fabrics, the color must be incorporated during granulating. In this way, the subsequently extracted yarn is colored, omitting the dyeing process and reducing water consumption, making it more environmentally friendly than conventional methods.

Next comes extracting threads and weaving. Taking out a piece of fabric, perforated with both large holes and small holes, Shao relates that when worn for running, the breeze passes through the larger holes before the smaller

holes, to enhance the body's feeling of coolness. And the longer one runs, the cooler it gets.

The perforations are not for aesthetics, but a unique weaving technique that simulates air flow based on aerodynamic principles, refined over the process of exhaustive experimentation.

Sunny Huang, executive director of New Wide, a Taiwanese fabric industry leader with annual revenue of US \$1 billion, said that they experiment with more than a thousand kinds of fabrics every year, such as mixing Xylitol (often used to make chewing gum) with recycled plastic bottles to make fabric, hoping to make clothing as cool and dry as chewing gum. They try all kinds of wild and crazy ideals, of which less than three percent can be commercialized.

It is this exhaustive research and development that enables the rebirth of the bottles recovered by Haitian women, and imbues them with more functionality.

This also attracts buyers from all over the world to Taiwan in the search for recycled fabrics. More than 1,000 booths at the Taipei International Textile Fair featured fabrics for sale made from recycled bottles and fishing nets.

Sunny Huang says, "If we showed virgin materials rather than recycled ones, we don't even get to sit down with a customer, as we'd be wasting each other's time." It is as if the whole world is only interested in buying fabrics and clothing made from recycled PET bottles and fishing nets.

Previously, only jerseys that were shortlisted for the FIFA World



Product & Service Councils



Cup's top 32 teams would be made from recycled bottles, and their publicity value outweighed utility. But now, it is a completely different story.

The Bottle Wars Have Begun

As early as 2024, brands like adidas and Puma expect to use 100% recycled materials from plastic bottles or fishing nets. Coca-Cola has also pledged that by 2030, an average of 50% of its product packaging will use recycled materials. All of these cannot be accomplished without Taiwan.

This is where the commercial potential comes into play. Even if every single one of the five billion PET bottles

Taiwan consumes every year was recycled to make fabrics, it would not even satisfy the needs of adidas alone. If we add global brands with similar policies, the volume of PET bottles required would be stratospheric.

This has triggered a great battle over PET bottles. As Sunny Huang notes, "A huge industrial chain is emerging, from collection, remanufacturing to processing, because everyone wants good recycled PET bottle materials and suppliers. It has even given rise to a new type of business: identify whether the fabric is recycled." Using a special light source, genuine recycled fabric will immediately reflect light; otherwise, it is fake.

This is the solution to ocean litter. When PET bottles become scarcer and more expensive, who will recklessly discard them?

For Taiwan, ocean rubbish has overturned the business models of the past. Previously, negotiations with

customers focused on price, quality and delivery time; now, the first order of discussion is sustainability and technology. Taiwan has come up with numerous solutions and products to resolve the most pressing environmental issues. For example, popular fabric made from reconstituted PET bottles from Haiti, or biodegradable clothes that are currently under development.

Sunny Huang relates that only through environmental sustainability and social responsibility can actually order negotiations be carried out. Sustainability now carries a competitive threshold, and failure to provide it will lead to elimination from the market.

Plastic bottles from Haiti journey across the seas to Taiwan. Transnational cooperative efforts to combat marine garbage have taught Taiwanese companies that the battle for survival in the future will be no profitability without sustainability.

Commonwealth Magazine

Asian Council on Water, Energy, and Environment

Sustainable fishing initiative agreed by 14 nations

Governments responsible for 40% of the world's coastlines have pledged to end overfishing, restore dwindling fish populations and stop the flow of plastic pollution into the seas in the next 10 years.

The leaders of the 14 nations have set out a series of commitments that mark the world's biggest ocean sustainability initiative, in the absence of a UN treaty on marine life.

Australia, Canada, Chile, Fiji, Ghana, Indonesia, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Namibia, Norway, Palau and Portugal — have vowed to end harmful subsidies that contribute to overfishing,



a key demand of environmentalists.

They would also aim to eliminate illegal fishing through better enforcement and management, and to minimize bycatch and discards, as well as implementing fisheries plans based on scientific advice.

Each of the nations, members of the High-Level Panel for Sustainable Ocean Economy, has also pledged to

ensure that all the areas of ocean within its exclusive economic zone are managed sustainably by 2025. That amounts to an area of ocean roughly the size of Africa.

Research has found that if oceans were sustainably managed, they could provide six times more food. Economists calculate that for every US\$1 invested in sustainable oceans, there is about US\$5 return in economic, social, environmental and health benefits, and that sustainably managing the oceans would create about 12 million new jobs.

The 14 world leaders want other nations to join the panel, to create a global sustainable ocean plan that they said could also have a major influence on the climate.

One-fifth of the reductions in emissions needed to meet the Paris climate agreement could come from the oceans by improving their ability to absorb carbon and by investing in technologies such as offshore wind, the panel said.

The Guardian

Product & Service Councils

Asian Council on Tourism

Reviving APAC travel with smart tourism



The ongoing pandemic has severely impacted the tourism industry, disrupting airlines and international travels. In Singapore, visitor arrival has shrunk by 99.1% compared to last year, and the country is now looking towards re-opening borders and implementing travel bubbles, as COVID-19 restrictions ease.

While governments all over the world, including Singapore, continue to invest in technology as digital enablers to enhance visitor experiences, key players in the tourism industry can take a further step towards implementing “smart tourism” practices – the use of technology to modernize operations and improve tourism efficiency, with an emphasis on providing safety to travellers. This includes smart experiences across the customer journey, such as personalised real-time safety alerts and contactless interactions that promote sanitation and safety.

Contact tracing and real-time alerts

Real-time safety alerts via digital channels provide travellers with timely information to both enjoy their journey and to feel safe in the process. A study conducted by King’s business school revealed that safety-related messages in travel destinations’ promotional material are positively influencing travel intention, underscoring the importance that travellers placed on safety in the aftermath of COVID-19.

In Singapore, the government

rolled out a community-driven contact tracing app, TraceTogether, to support nationwide efforts in combating COVID-19. The contact tracing process is facilitated through the exchange of Bluetooth signals among nearby mobile devices running the same app, which is mandatory for overseas visitors. The data collected helps to speed up the identification of people who were in close contact with an infected person, fulfilling health security needs without causing noticeable inconvenience to travellers.

Personalising the experience

With international borders remaining closed in most countries, tourism organisations are looking towards domestic travel to boost consumption. At a virtual dialogue with tourism industry players in July, Minister Chan Chun Sing noted that Singapore has a significant domestic market that is searching for new experiences. In the same month, the Singapore government launched a S\$45 million SingapoRediscovered campaign to encourage domestic tourism through exploring the different sides of the island.

To capitalise on this, local tourism providers will require a deeper understanding of the new untapped customer segments that can be established through strategic data partnerships. Adobe has partnered with leading brands in the travel and tourism industry, including STB, to roll out data-driven initiatives aimed at delivering hyper-personalised experiences for visitors.

One such initiative is the Singapore Tourism Analytics Network (STAN) that combines all data that the tourism industry uses, to help STB finetune policies as a regulator, and also for their tourism partners to better understand preferences to target consumers and identify new opportunities.

Meanwhile, in Australia, Virgin Airlines partnered with Tourism Australia to understand user journeys and assist in trip planning by sharing data such as destination. If a user based

out of Sydney explores the Guide to Darwin on Tourism Australia’s website, for example, Virgin Australia can subsequently serve personalised flight offers for that destination. The same data from the booking can in turn be shared back with Tourism Australia to better assist the user in planning and preparing for the trip, providing a personalised airline deal and offers to travellers.

Contactless experience

To gain consumer confidence for travel safety, automated contactless interactions are a key component. It is however also one of the biggest challenges for tourism providers. Contactless experiences in hospitality may include check-in through mobile apps or self-serve kiosks and using robots for room-delivery and other services to enhance sanitation and distancing efforts. There is an opportunity for hotels to use data in these scenarios, to offer personalised services or smart suggestions, to create more efficient and delightful experiences.

Government and tourism organisations should also look into modernising processes across the customer journey by automating paperwork through the adoption of e-signatures, further reducing physical touchpoints while adding a layer of health security in times like now where social distancing measures are mandated. Such digital innovations not only improve efficiency and reduce operation costs, they also deliver greater convenience and a superior experience to the consumers.

The digital customer experience has become even more necessary as a medium for brands to converse with the consumer in the new normal. While recovery for the tourism sector will take time, it is important for the industry to double down on customer experience now to ensure safety and comfort for travellers. This will contribute to the recovery of Asia Pacific’s tourism and drive new future-proof innovations for the industry.

WARC

Product & Service Councils

Asian Council on Food and Agriculture

Indonesia banks on technology to overcome food estates' poor soil



The Indonesian government is forging ahead with a plan to create huge national food estates in the provinces of North Sumatra and Central Kalimantan despite concern from scientists over their viability.

The effort to grow and store more food stocks is part of a national food-estate project the government has been developing since June, fearing that the COVID-19 pandemic could create a food crisis. The Food and Agriculture Organization, a United Nations agency, warned in October that the pandemic "exposed the fragility of the agri-food systems" and that possibly 132 million people worldwide may go hungry in 2020 as a result of the economic recession triggered by the pandemic.

Indonesian President Joko Widodo said in a meeting in September that the solution was to ramp up production through the food-estate program.

At least four ministries are participating in developing 148,000 hectares of land for rice fields and 622,000 hectares for other crops in Central Kalimantan, as well as 64,000 hectares for horticulture in North Sumatra. Widodo said the project should be based on careful calculations using rigorous science.

But some scientists say there



are important factors that have not been considered in determining the locations of food estates.

Budiman Minasny, a professor in soil science at the University of Sydney, says the type of soil in Siria-ria village is derived from acid tuff which is not fully-weathered, shallow, and hard. "It is the hardened ashes produced by the Toba supervolcanic eruption that have poor nutrients and high acidity," he said.

Isner Manalu, the manager of a small coffee farm in the regency, said locals have to enrich the soil by adding organic fertilizer -- animal droppings. He said: "Our ancestors knew this very well. They say, 'Sinur na pinahan gabe na ni ula'" -- multiply the livestock and the harvest is rich.

Husnain, head of the Land Resources Research Agency (BBSDL P), which sits under the Ministry of Agriculture, said the estate's location was recommended by the local government.

But Minasny, the soil scientist, said not all soils in the regency have the same potential for agriculture. Google Earth satellite images show that Paruluhon lies in lowland near Lake Toba. Because erosion washes sediments downhill, he said, its location has better soil than the highland village of Ria-ria, where the food-estate project is located.

Husnain admitted that the land's suitability in Ria-Ria village is marginal. "But by introducing technology, of course it can be more productive," she said. Husnain said the BBSDL P has analyzed the soil and has prepared a strategy to make the land more suitable. But it will take some time because everything must

be done carefully, she said.

A food estate is also being developed in the regency of Pulang Pisau in Central Kalimantan. Here, at least 30,000 hectares of peat land is being transformed to cultivate rice. Yudistira, a plant breeder in the Rice Research Agency

(BBPadi), which also sits under the Agriculture Ministry, says technology has been supporting the project there.

Using genetic engineering and plant breeding science, BBPadi has developed a number of rice varieties, such as Inpari 32, Inpari 42, Inpara 8 and Inpara 9. These have high yields and are resistant to disease, and also can grow on peat land, a type of soil that is very acidic and toxic to most rice. Yudistira said that while one variant seems struggling to grow on peatland, "that doesn't affect productivity."

Dwi Andreas Santosa, a professor of soil biotechnology at Bogor Agricultural University, is skeptical about any project on peat land. To get a successful estate, he said, the government needs to check soil qualities, water management, cultivation technology and socioeconomic aspects.

Santosa also said that neglecting science will likely bring failure in the food-estate projects, as with previous attempts over the past 25 years. But Yudistira is undeterred. He said his rice varieties could reach 5 tons per hectare and will be profitable.

Besides planting superior varieties, he said planting rice on peat land can be managed by using organic fertilizers and smart excavators to carefully plow the land. He shares Widodo's optimism that the project will be successful, because technology is "intensively guarding this project," he said.

Nikkei Asian Review

Investment & Joint Ventures in the Region

TSRI signs deal with Arm in UK



From left, National Applied Research Laboratories president Wu Kuang-chong, TSRI director-general Yeh Wen-kuan, Arm Taiwan president C.K. Tseng and Shawn Hsu, director-general of the Ministry of Science and Technology's Department of Engineering and Technologies (CNA)

The Taiwan Semiconductor Research Institute (TSRI) on November 24 signed an agreement with British semiconductor and software design company Arm Ltd, allowing TSRI free access to a wide range of Arm's products for research purposes.

TSRI is the first institute in Asia to be included in the Arm Flexible Access for Research program, enabling researchers to use processors and software produced by Arm when designing new systems of their own.

Under the program, Taiwanese researchers would not have to develop chips from scratch, but could instead build on existing products, according to TSRI director-general Yeh Wen-kuan.

Other institutes that have signed agreements with Arm include Harvard University in the US and the University

of Cambridge in the UK, he added.

Chen Chi-shi, a deputy section chief at TSRI, said that the goal of the program is to help professors further their research and enable students to gain hands-on experience in their respective fields.

With the signing of the agreement, TSRI has also become the first research institute to gain access to ETHOS-N78, the newest neural processing unit developed by Arm, Arm Taiwan president C.K. Tseng said.

The new neural processing unit can be used in accelerating the development of artificial intelligence applications, Tseng said.

TSRI is one of eight institutes under the Ministry of Science and Technology's National Applied Research Laboratories.

Taipei Times

Fiat Chrysler Automobiles to invest \$150 million for Global Digital hub in Hyderabad



Automaker Fiat Chrysler Automobiles on December 16 announced \$150 million investment for setting up Global Digital hub, which will create 1,000 new jobs.

Chief information officer of FCA - North America and Asia Pacific, Mamatha Chamarthi in a virtual press conference said the proposed Global Digital Hub will be Fiat Chryslers' largest center for information technology outside of North America.

The FCA ICT India will operate as a fully integrated part of Fiat Chrysler's global team. The digital hub is being set



up in Hyderabad in Telangana.

Over the coming years, we will ramp up our presence across both Hyderabad through our new center and in Chennai where we have recently expanded our engineering operations.

It is my privilege to announce that FCA is committing \$150 million in India towards the set up and growth of the new global digital hub. This investment will help create nearly 1,000 new jobs by the end of 2021," Mamatha Chamarthi said.

FCA designs, engineers, manufactures, distributes and sells vehicles under the Abarth, Alfa Romeo, Chrysler, Dodge, Fiat, Fiat Professional, Jeep, Lancia, Ram, SRT brands as well as luxury cars

under the Maserati brands.

FCA will be attracting the best digital talent in India and focus on niche technology areas such as connected vehicle services and data sciences among others.

She further said the Global Digital Hub will also enable FCA to expand its relationships with India's rich digital ecosystem including suppliers, startups and universities to accelerate its innovation agenda.

Telangana minister for IT and industries KT Rama Rao welcomed the FCAs initiative and assured all possible support from the state government's side.

FCA has a major presence in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, with headquarters in Mumbai and employs over 3,000 people. With the Global Digital Hub, FCA will be expanding its presence in Telangana. The company has a joint venture vehicle and powertrain manufacturing facility in Ranjangaon, Maharashtra. Its engineering and product development operations are located in Pune and Chennai.

Times of India

Investment & Joint Ventures in the Region

South Korea pension fund joins with Hines for real estate venture



South Korea's National Pension Service, Jeonju, has entered into a \$1.5 billion joint venture with real estate investment firm Hines to build mixed-use, residential, office and logistics properties worldwide, according to a joint news release.

The joint venture provides "ready capital for some interesting opportunities that will arise in the next 12 to 18 months," said David L. Steinbach, Hines global CIO, in an interview. For example, Hines executives expect that there will be opportunities to invest in sites in or near cities where properties are not often offered up for sale, but will

be due to the pandemic, he said.

"Having the opportunity to invest, in and of itself, will be a once-in-a-career type of thing," Mr. Steinbach said.

Hyo-Joon Ahn, CIO of the 737.5 trillion won (\$667 billion) NPS, said in the news release that the joint venture will provide significant opportunities to invest in "the highest-quality, bulletproof assets"

"The current economic climate, shaped by global responses to the pandemic, has impacted all sectors of commercial real estate," Mr. Ahn said.

The venture is expected to capitalize on the transformation of living environments, consumer behavior and use of space combined with new technology in real estate development, Mr. Ahn added.

Twenty percent of the capital has already been invested in projects in North America and the Asia-Pacific region.

"Our view is that there will be a flight to quality on the other side of this (pandemic)," Mr. Steinbach said.

Pensions & Investments Online

SIA deepens co-operation with Indian joint venture Vistara



Singapore Airlines and its Indian joint venture Vistara have inked a commercial co-operation framework agreement, widening its existing areas of partnership.

The agreement, which builds on an existing codeshare partnership signed in 2017, will see both carriers co-operate in areas such as capacity planning, sales and marketing, as well as customer service and operations.

SIA says that the partnership will "allow both airlines to achieve further synergies on services between Singapore and India, as well as in key regions of Southeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand".

The agreement will be subject to Singaporean regulatory approval, says SIA, which owns 49% of Vistara. Indian conglomerate Tata Sons owns the remaining 51% shareholding in the New Delhi-based carrier.

The announcement of a deepened partnership comes amid a news report from Bloomberg detailing the "crossroads" the Tata Group has found itself with regard to its airline joint ventures.

Apart from Vistara, Tata also has majority shareholding in AirAsia India. The Bloomberg report notes Vistara has "never made money" since its launch in 2015, and faces a collapse in corporate travel demand amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The report also suggests a difference in management styles between executives appointed by both joint venture partners. Vistara and the Tata Group declined to comment on the Bloomberg report.

Airswift Ventures into Taiwan



Global workforce solutions provider Airswift has formed a joint venture with Taiwan-based HR and payroll software specialist Take5People to tap into Taiwan's burgeoning offshore wind industry.

Airswift said that the joint venture will allow the company to deliver its full spectrum of services within the region with immediate effect, while accommodating local regulations and legislation.

The draw of Taiwan is of no

coincidence for Airswift, the company said. Following a joint venture in Vietnam in June 2020, Airswift continues to diversify into offshore wind.

As a hub for this booming industry, Taiwan is a key strategic location for Airswift to engage with new prospects and existing clients in this space.

"Airswift prides itself in being a global company, and with a predicted 15 GW offshore wind capacity by 2035 in Taiwan, it's crucial we have a strong local presence to help our clients deliver those projects," said Charles Pfauwadel, VP Asia at Airswift.

"As we further imprint our identity into the Asian market and continue expanding our business, we aspire to help strengthen local economy by supporting employment and developing talent."

Offshore Wind

Flight Global

Economic Cooperation News

Taiwan, Brunei sign MOU to promote halal economy



Taiwan and Brunei have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to promote halal economy between the two sides.

The document, titled the MOU on Syariah Compliance Products Development and Trade, was signed on December 2 by Pengiran Haris Duraman, chairman of the Brunei Darussalam BIMP-EAGA Business Council (BD BEBC), and witnessed by Taiwan's



representative to Brunei Andrew Lee.

It will be mailed back to Taipei for signing by a relevant official at the Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA), the other signatory of the MOU.

The BIMP-EAGA refers to the Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area, which covers a population of 80 million. It was launched in 1994 in Davao City in the Philippines to promote subregional economic co-operation.

Lee told CNA that the MOU was a result of 10 months of discussion initiated by the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Brunei and the BD

BEBC.

The MOU aims to foster cooperation in the halal industry, reduce technical barriers to trade and facilitate bilateral relations between Taiwan and Brunei, particularly with respect to halal export development and promotion programs, according to Lee.

It also focuses on investment opportunities in the halal economy and possible joint ventures in the halal value chain between Taiwan and Brunei, he added.

According to Lee, Brunei is well positioned to bridge the gap between Europe, the Middle East, South America and Taiwan in the halal industry, which is a global economic driver encompassing a 1.9 billion Muslim population.

Various Taiwanese halal-certified foods were displayed outside the MOU-signing venue as part of the representative office's effort to showcase Taiwan's efforts to venture into the global halal food market, he said.

CNA

US, Taiwan join forces to launch education project



The US and Taiwan have launched a new bilateral education initiative that American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) Director Brent Christensen said was aimed at expanding access to Mandarin and English-language instruction and safeguarding academic freedom.

At a ceremony at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Taipei for the US-Taiwan Education Initiative, Christensen said that it would "highlight Taiwan's

important role in providing Chinese-language instruction to Americans and to people around the world, and seeks to expand Taiwan's influence in this area."

As part of the initiative, the AIT and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in Washington signed on December 2 a memorandum of understanding on international education cooperation that focuses on language education.

The memorandum is expected to remain in effect for five years, with the possibility of an extension, the AIT said.

The two sides have agreed to enhance and to expand their existing educational exchange programs, Christensen said, adding that once regular travel resumes following the COVID-19 pandemic, more Americans would be able to teach and study in Taiwan, and vice versa.

The initiative is "set against the backdrop of two distinct, but related trends," he said. These trends were the closure of Confucius Institutes by

universities around the world over their role in China-led "censorship and malign influence campaigns," and Taiwan's increased commitment to English-language education.

The US is also eager to help provide English-language instruction to support Taiwan's goal of becoming bilingual by 2030, he said. The new initiative would provide a platform for the US and Taiwan to expand their cooperation in the pursuit of their shared interests and values, he said.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Joseph Wu said that it was "particularly meaningful" for Taiwan to strengthen bilingual education cooperation with the US at a time "when academic freedom and freedom of speech in the US and other countries are being invaded by certain political forces."

Wu described the initiative as a "starting point for comprehensive educational cooperation" between the two nations.

Taipei Times

Uzbekistan eyes Taiwan chicken



A local Taiwanese chicken breed has piqued the interest of Uzbek officials, who might make their country the first overseas destination for the bird, the Taiwan Council of Agriculture (COA) said on December 5.

Uzbek agricultural officials who previously visited Taiwan expressed their amazement about the taste of the Kuei-ting chicken and reported their findings to Uzbek Prime Minister Abdulla Aripov, Department of Animal Industry Director-General Chang Ching-wei said.

Aripov had planned to visit

Taiwan in May to gather more information about the breed, but canceled the trip due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Chang said. Nonetheless, Aripov still plans to visit Taiwan in person to discuss introducing the breed to Uzbekistan after the pandemic subsides, he said.

Taiwan hopes to start exporting breeding eggs to the Central Asian country in the near future, he said.

If the deal with the Uzbek government is realized, it would be the first time that Taiwan's colored native chickens are exported, he said, adding that the agreement is expected to stimulate the sales of other local breeds as well.

First introduced in 2016, the breed, known for its delicate meat texture, was cultivated by the council's Livestock Research Institute and Kai Shing Food Corp.

Company chairman Teng Chin-ten named the breed after Shih Kuei-ting, founder of the Taiwan's first fast food chain, TTK Fried Chicken, in honor of Shih's help in introducing him to the industry.

Due to selective breeding, the chickens' drumsticks are larger than ordinary, with their sales alone equaling those of the rest of the bird, COA Minister Chen Chi-chung said.

As Taiwan remains an area affected by avian influenza, it is not allowed to export chicks and can only export breeding eggs that have been disinfected, as stipulated by World Organization for Animal Health regulations, Chang said. Chickens bred from the eggs would not be able to produce offspring, which means that foreign importers must continue purchasing eggs from Taiwan, he added.

Black velvet silkie chickens are another promising candidate for exportation, council poultry farming section head Lee Yi-chien said.

Although the black chicken breed originated in China, after years of crossbreeding there, it is no longer similar to the version in Taiwan, he said, adding that some Southeast Asian countries have expressed interest in importing it.

Taipei Times

Singapore, US ink agreement on trade financing and investment cooperation

Singapore has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the United States to deepen economic cooperation and extend trade financing and investment support to their respective companies.

The MOU aims to improve the availability of and access to trade financing options for companies from both countries, said the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) in a press release on December 16.

This will help remedy the global tightening of credit following the economic slowdown caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, said MTI. It will also facilitate bilateral trade in goods and services to enhance growth

opportunities.

The MOU also seeks to strengthen cooperation in investment promotion and provide opportunities for both countries to explore the use of technology such as fintech to address new trade financing and investment challenges.

The agreement was signed by Minister for Trade and Industry Chan Chun Sing and US Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross.

He said: "Through this MOU, we will facilitate company investments into Singapore and the US, and help businesses access more trade financing facilities. We also look forward to catalysing greater trade and investment flows between the US, Singapore, and South-east Asia, and enabling our companies to continue trading and accessing opportunities in these challenging times."

The MOU, he added, will



help Singapore importers finance the purchase of US exports and support Singapore investors looking at opportunities in the US.

The renewable, two-year MOU will be overseen by MTI and the US Department of Commerce. It will be supported by implementing agencies such as Enterprise Singapore, the Export-Import Bank of the US and the US Commercial Service in Singapore.

The Straits Times

Turkey, Italy explore greater economic cooperation

Italy's foreign minister said on December 10 that Turkey has great opportunities for economic cooperation in infrastructure, adding that he hopes for more cooperation in railways and other areas in the coming months.

"Both countries have targets in the energy sector as well, especially in energy diversification, and supply improvement," Luigi Di Maio said at a Turkey-Italy Joint Economic and Trade Committee (JETCO) meeting held by video link.

Pointing to important projects on the way, he said Turkey and Italy want to level up their business alliance in sustainable energy. "Italian companies are particularly active in the field of renewable energy," he stressed.

Saying that the two countries'



systems complement each other, he added: "We hope this complementarity continues. I think we can use the potential of this form of partnership in an even stronger way."

On the activities of three working groups under the committee that started in July, Di Maio said these groups are working on areas such as determining economic development areas, opening the way for new operations in Africa, Central Asia, and the Balkans, and

making progress on the Turkey-EU Customs Union Agreement.

T u r k e y has long sought an update to the Customs Union, saying that doing so would benefit both sides. "There are important opportunities for entrepreneurs in the field of economic cooperation," said Di

Maio.

"The development of bilateral cooperation is important for the growth of our economies," he added.

Saying that existing market access barriers need to be eliminated for this, Di Maio argued that the technical development of the Customs Union agreement is extremely important.

Hurriyet Daily News

India-Bangladesh virtual summit gives boost to cooperation

India and Bangladesh have agreed to further enhance their cooperation in the field of multilateral projects and institutions after the summit level virtual meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on December 17. Both the countries agreed to enhance their cooperation at the multilateral level involving connectivity, finance and fighting COVID-19 situation in the South Asian region.

Bangladesh has expressed the willingness to join the road project connecting India, Myanmar and Thailand. According to the joint statement issued by the Ministry of External Affairs after the meeting between the two Prime Ministers, Bangladesh Prime Minister expressed keen interest in the ongoing India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral



highway project. She sought support of India for enabling Bangladesh to connect with this project with a view to enhance connectivity between the regions of South and SouthEast Asia.

In order to enhance connectivity and simplify movement of passengers and goods between both the countries, India and Bangladesh agreed to an early operationalization of the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicles Agreement through

expeditious signing of the Enabling MoU for Bangladesh, India and Nepal to commence the movement of goods and passengers, with provision for Bhutan to join at a later date.

Both the leaders highlighted the role of regional multilateral organisations like SAARC and BIMSTEC in dealing with the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. Bangladesh Prime Minister thanked Prime Minister Modi for proposing creation of the SAARC Emergency Response Fund to counter effects of COVID-19 in the South Asian region.

Prime Minister Hasina also reiterated the proposal for establishment of a SAARC Medical and Public Health Research Institute and sought support in this regard.

All India Radio

Terramera Deploys New Technology to Speed Discovery of Sustainable Crop Solutions for Farmers

Terramera, a global ag-tech leader fusing science, nature, and artificial intelligence to transform how food is grown and the economics of agriculture, has announced the launch of six custom, state-of-the-art plant growth chambers, showcasing Terramera's technological capabilities and redefining indoor agriculture's contribution to field-based production.

Many crop protection products fail in the field because labs and greenhouses do not accurately replicate real-world conditions. Each chamber offers precise control over temperature (ranging from 5 to 40 degrees Celsius), humidity and light to simulate many possible field conditions, from cool nights and morning mists to desert and subtropical conditions and will be outfitted with a Terramera-built automation system for end-to-end integration. Automation will enable experiments to run entirely without human intervention including watering, spraying, nutrient dosing and imaging of the plants throughout their lifecycle, dramatically accelerating data collection for product performance and increasing accuracy with Terramera's industry-leading Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) platform.

"Customized growth chambers allow us to simulate weather to study disease and insect infestations with integrated treatment and imaging systems in one automated system — replicated six times for parallel studies," said Annett Rozek, Terramera Chief Scientific Officer. "This is as close as we can get to real-world conditions in a research environment and will deliver solutions as rapidly and efficiently as possible."

The new growth chambers bring Terramera's total to 12 and are part of a larger technological scale-up for the company, which also brought a new best-



in-class liquid handling robot on board. Terramera's own machine learning (ML) model named the robot, "Enzing," which is integrated into Terramera's fully automated in-vitro screening and data analysis pipeline. The robot has already enabled Terramera's largest in-vitro screening project yet, testing the company's Actigate library against numerous plant disease pathogens.

"This marks an exciting milestone for Terramera and a step-change in the industry by adding a new, essential capacity," said Karn Manhas, Terramera Founder and CEO. "Simulated

environment studies are the missing link between controlled environments like the lab or greenhouse and field trials since many products fail because lab and greenhouse conditions are too different from the outside world on a farm. This technology increases our throughput, allowing us to predict outcomes more accurately, allowing us to quickly scale our knowledge and technologies to make farming healthier, more sustainable and productive while turning back the clock on climate change."

Precision Ag

New technology allows rapid detection of specific airborne viruses in the field

Researchers in South Korea have developed a technology that enables immediate detection of specific airborne viruses in the field.

The Korea Institute of Science and Technology (KIST) announced that the collaborative research team led by Dr. Joonseok Lee from Molecular Recognition Research Center, Professor Min-Gon Kim from the Department of Chemistry, Gwangju Institute of Science and Technology (GIST), and Professor Chan-Seon Song from the Department of Veterinary Medicine, Konkuk University, developed a detection platform that can simultaneously sample and monitor airborne viruses in the field.

Testing the biological hazards such as various bacteria, fungi, and viruses present in the air generally requires collecting the sample air from the field and conducting a separate analysis on the sample in the laboratory.

This analysis process may take a few hours to even several days. Although the existing techniques that support on-site analysis without having to transfer the sample back to the laboratory enabled monitoring the concentration of bacteria or fungi, they displayed limitations in distinguishing the specific microorganism existence or being used without further cleaning.

The KIST-GIST collaborative research team developed an integrated sampling/monitoring platform that uses a disposable kit to easily collect and detect airborne viruses on-site.

The disposable virus sampling/monitoring kit developed by the team is

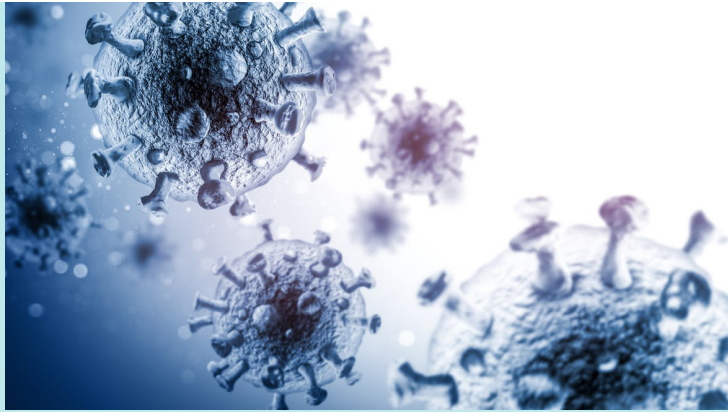


Technology

similar to the pregnancy test kit, and enables completion of both sampling and diagnosing on airborne viruses within 50 minutes on-site (10 to 30 minutes of sampling and 20 minutes of diagnosis) without requiring a separate cleaning or separation process.

The developed monitoring platform collects and concentrates the airborne virus on a porous glass fiber pad, and then the virus is flowed to the detection zone by a capillary force.

The flowed virus is combined with the near-infrared (NIR) emission of synthesized nanoprobe conjugated with antibodies that react only to specific viruses in order to selectively detect the desired viruses even in an environment



having simultaneous existence of several types of viruses. In addition, the platform supports injection of more than four kits at once to enable monitoring of multiple virus types at once.

The airborne viruses are affected by external factors such as the indoor space area size, the use of air conditioning system, and temperature

and humidity.

Thus, the collaborative research team established an artificial aerosolization chamber system that can regulate external factors to verify the developed platform and conducted experiments under certain conditions.

The team was able to sample influenza viruses spread out in a large space, concentrate the virus to about more than one million times concentration in a porous pad, and recover the viruses attached to the pad surface with an efficiency of about 82% through surface pretreatment and test solution optimization to finally detect the virus in the detection zone.

News Medical

Policy Updates

Australia

Australia approves tough veto powers



The Australian parliament on December 3 passed legislation giving the federal government power to veto any agreement struck with foreign states, a move likely to anger China and intensify a bitter diplomatic spat between the two countries.

The law allows the Canberra to block any agreement between Australian states, councils or institutions

and a foreign government, such as a controversial 2018 deal between the state of Victoria and China.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison has said that the law is not aimed at any country, but analysts widely view it as being directed at China.

Under the terms of the new law, the foreign minister can veto any agreements with foreign governments if they “adversely affect Australia’s foreign relations” or are “inconsistent with Australian foreign policy.”

One deal expected to come under the spotlight is Victoria’s participation in China’s Belt and Road Initiative, which Morrison has said weakens the federal government’s ability to control foreign policy. Morrison declined to comment on whether that arrangement would be vetoed.

Ties between Australia and China further soured this week when a Chinese official posted a fake image of an Australian soldier holding a knife with blood on it to the throat of an Afghan

child, prompting Morrison to demand an apology from Beijing.

Some Australian universities’ agreements with state-backed Chinese institutions might come under closer scrutiny. The state of New South Wales last year scrapped a Chinese-funded language program in schools due to fears over foreign influence.

Reuters

Bangladesh

Bangladesh plans to attract EV manufacturers

The Bangladeshi government is preparing an auto industry policy which will call for at least 15% of registered vehicles to be powered by “environment-friendly electricity” in 2030.

“The policy is providing special importance on [the] assembly and manufacture of environment-



Policy Updates



friendly electricity run vehicles,” stated the Ministry of Industries in a draft Automobile Industry Development Policy-2020 which focuses on electric vehicles (EVs).

On December 3, policymakers outlined measures which could attract companies to set up auto manufacturing sites in the nation, including donations of free land.

“Several foreign companies, including Toyota have expressed [an] interest to set up automobile factor[ies] in Bangladesh,” said prime ministerial aide Salman F Rahman. “I asked them to manufacture electricity-run vehicles and assured them of providing any facilities they want.”

The nation hosts just one vehicle assembly line at present although Bangladesh Auto Industries Ltd last year started work on an EV production site in Chittagong with an initial \$200 million investment.

Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of Bangladeshi thinktank the Policy Research Institute said the nation has the potential to establish solar-powered car as well as EV manufacturing sites.

Ministry of Industries joint secretary Anwarul Alam told pv magazine: “Our plan is meeting local demand [for] electric vehicles by setting up factories, and also to export.”

A prototype, made-in-Bangladesh EV completed a 2,000km trip across the nation in July last year and the country’s roads host numerous unregistered electric three-wheelers, imported from India and China.

The country has just 14 EV charging points, powered by solar, with a total capacity of 278 kW.

PV Magazine

Cambodia

Cambodia government seek to bring about resorts with new legislation

Cambodia’s new casino legislation, the Law on the Management of Commercial Gambling, establishes a 97-article legal framework that includes tax rates and license requirements, as well as a new regulatory body to oversee the industry.

Enacted in November 2020, the law replaces a patchwork of legislation and ad hoc agreements that have hitherto governed casinos in the country. It establishes one of the world’s lowest tax rates for casinos and the Cambodian government says it will create a “safe and sound” sector and help attract greater investment.

Ministry of Economy and Finance official Ros Phearun told Nikkei Asia on Monday that the new regulations will provide for a “safe and sound” and “competitive” sector, and were tailored to attract more integrated commercial gambling developments rather than standalone casinos.

Cambodia has 93 licensed casinos. Most are clustered around border towns and the coastal city of Sihanoukville and cater to foreign visitors, as locals are barred from gaming establishments.

Under the new law, integrated resorts and standalone casinos will both pay taxes based on gross gaming revenue, or GRR. The former, however, will pay a split rate of 4% for VIP players and 7% for mass customers, while the latter will pay a flat rate of 7%. Integrated resorts, moreover, will be eligible for licenses of up to 20 years, while licenses for casino-only establishments will be capped at five years.

The new GGR rates, which come into effect next year, compare to 39.5% in Macau, 35% in Vietnam and 15% in Singapore, which will introduce higher rates in 2022.

Much of how the regulations are enforced will fall to the Commercial



Gambling Committee of Cambodia, the regulatory body established by the new law.

The 11-person committee, led by the minister of economy and finance, includes representatives from several ministries and the police. It will control gaming policies, compliance and licensing, including that of junket operators bringing high rollers to casinos in the country.

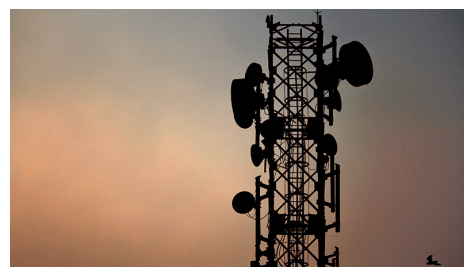
Lorien Pilling, director at Global Betting and Gaming Consultants, said the law provided “comfort and advantage” to incumbents and set a “very competitive” tax rate but looked unlikely to radically change the landscape.

“Local citizens will remain barred from entering gambling venues, which means the market is still driven by international gamblers,” he said. “Wagering on sports will remain restricted to casino venues and there is no mention of any online gaming licenses.”

Yogonet

India

India announces new controls on sourcing telecoms gear



India will identify “trusted” sources of telecoms gear its carriers can use in their networks as part of the new security directive for the sector;



technology minister Ravi Shankar Prasad told a news conference on December 16.

While Prasad did not name any company or country from which sourcing of equipment would not be allowed, some Indian government officials have privately expressed concerns over mobile carriers' use of telecom gear from Huawei, which the United States has accused of spying for China.

New Delhi will announce a list of trusted sources and products for Indian telecoms providers - and possibly a blacklist - as part of the new directive, which will likely be launched next year.

"This is a very important decision with respect to national security," Prasad said.

Telecoms providers will have to use new devices which have been approved as trusted products, he said, though he added that the policy does not require wireless carriers to replace gear already being used.

A crackdown on equipment made by Chinese firms could keep Huawei and smaller rival ZTE out of the running from future Indian telecoms contracts.

India has so far not banned Huawei or ZTE, and its telecoms department did not immediately respond to a request asking if the policy was aimed at Chinese gearmakers.

However, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has told two state-run telecoms firms to use locally-made rather than Chinese telecom equipment to upgrade their mobile networks to 4G, a senior government source told Reuters previously.

Reuters

Iran

Iran passes bill to end nuclear scrutiny

Iran's top political chamber on December 2 gave final approval to a bill forcing Iranian President Hassan Rouhani to end international nuclear inspections unless the US

lifts key sanctions by February, giving the incoming administration of US president-elect Joe Biden just weeks to make a diplomatic breakthrough.

The legislation also says that Iran would immediately take measures to start producing 20% enriched uranium for peaceful purposes and increase its stockpile of the fissile material, potentially reducing the time Iran needs to make preparations to acquire a nuclear weapon.

The powerful Guardian Council, a political and legal body made up of senior clerics and Islamic scholars, ratified the bill and made it a legal requirement, while extending the deadline for sanctions relief to two months, instead of one, Iranian state TV reported.

That would appear to give the Iranian government — severely weakened since US President Donald Trump walked away from a 2015 nuclear deal — barely two weeks after Biden enters office to make major strides toward brokering the removal of US oil and banking sanctions.

The bill says that if the US does not remove the sanctions on Iran's lending industry, exports of crude oil and petroleum products, and overseas foreign currency deposits within two months, parliament would suspend a voluntary agreement the nation has with UN inspectors that allows them intrusive access to nuclear sites.

It was unclear whether the Iranian government would be able to contest or appeal the Guardian Council's decision or whether the so-called "Additional Protocol," which Iran signed with the IAEA alongside the 2015 nuclear accord, could be legally suspended by lawmakers alone.

Bloomberg

Japan

Japan plans tax breaks for foreign nationals to attract financial experts



The government plans to implement tax incentives for long-term foreign residents as part of efforts to turn the country into a major international financial hub, official sources said on November 25.

Under the current system, Japan imposes an inheritance tax on foreign nationals' overseas assets if they live in the country for more than 10 years, but the special measure to be introduced will make them exempt from the imposition, according to the sources.

The government also plans to allow unlisted firms, including investment funds, to add remuneration of executives to business expenses to help reduce their corporate taxes, the sources said.

The incentives will be included in the tax reform package for fiscal 2021 to be compiled by the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and its junior coalition partner Komeito.

The Cabinet is expected to approve the changes by the end of the year, with related bills to be submitted to the Diet early next year, according to the sources.

Behind the introduction of the new tax breaks is the fact that many highly skilled financial professionals from abroad leave Japan within 10 years partly due to the current taxation system, a ruling party source said. Foreign nationals who have resided here for 10 years or less only pay taxes on domestic property.

"The tax incentive will deliver a message that we want them to live longer and work longer in Japan," the source said.

Kyodo



Policy Updates

Korea

South Korea set to crack down on conglomerates with corporate reform steps



Photo: AFP-Jiji

South Korea is pushing for its most significant reform of corporate governance since President Moon Jae-in took office, a move that could add transparency to top decision-making at large conglomerates that dominate the economy.

The conglomerates, known as chaebols, propelled South Korea's rise as an export powerhouse. The semiconductors and cars made by the likes of Samsung Electronics Co. and Hyundai Motor Co. have also helped the country emerge from the pandemic slump quicker than many major economies.

Critics say the dominance of chaebols, where key decisions often rest on a handful of large shareholders, hampers fair business practices, stifles the competition crucial to economic growth and can facilitate the transfer of company power and wealth within families despite opposition from some shareholders.

Pushed by the ruling party for passage this year, the proposed revisions to commercial and fair-trade acts would make it harder for the largest shareholders to appoint auditors who share their interests. More companies will be scrutinized for any undue business favors to their affiliates. The proposals are dubbed "fair economy acts" by supporters, but denounced as

over-regulation by opponents.

The proposals would require auditors to be chosen from outside the corporate board for most companies, whereas the current law allows them to be picked from within — a practice that has raised criticism of rubber-stamping. The voting power of the largest shareholders and their families in naming an auditor would be limited at 3%.

The bills would also make it tougher for companies to funnel business orders to an affiliate that family members have large stakes in, while widening the range of individuals and organizations allowed to seek the prosecution of companies for violating fair trade rules.

While there may be disagreements on the appropriate scale of reform, there is more of a consensus on the need to improve chaebol governance and lessen the economy's reliance on a few large corporate groups. Many see the chaebol-led growth model as hindering the rise of new, smaller companies that are essential to boost the economy's growth potential.

Bloomberg

New Zealand

Government moves to pass a law to double sick leave from five days a year to 10

The Government will start the process of giving every New Zealander an extra five days of sick leave a year before Parliament adjourns for the summer break.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said the move shows the Government is getting "down to business" when it comes to implementing its pre-election policies.

Workplace Relations Minister Michael Wood said New Zealand needs to "move past the tough-it-out culture" when it comes to sick leave. "Covid-19 has shown how important it is to stay at home when people are sick," he said.

Wood confirmed that the legislation, which will be introduced before Christmas, would keep the current maximum entitlement of any unused sick leave at 20 days annually.

The announcement means the bill is expected to pass in mid-2021 and will go through the full select committee process so it's able to receive submissions.

More details on the scheme would be unveiled when it goes before the House. Wood did say, however, that the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment have calculated that it would account for just 0.9 per cent of New Zealand's total wage bill each year.

New Zealand Herald

Philippines

Philippines allows entry of foreign spouses, children from December 7



The Philippines has slightly relaxed its entry ban on foreigners, allowing the foreign spouses and children of Filipinos, as well as former Filipino citizens and their family.

During an announcement on November 27, Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque said that the Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases will allow "the entry to the Philippines of Filipino citizens' foreign spouses and children, regardless of age, who are traveling with them, starting December 7, 2020."

The task force will also permit the entry of former Filipino citizens, including their spouses and children, regardless of age, who are traveling with



Policy Updates

them.

Previously, the Philippine government only allowed entry for foreigners with investor or work visas. Foreigners with only tourist visas are still banned from the country.

But, as with all permitted travel, it is subject to conditions that foreign spouses, their children, and returning former Filipino citizens will have to comply with.

The conditions are the following:

- They are allowed visa-free entry under Executive Order No 408 series of 1960
- They must pre-book at a quarantine facility in the Philippines
- They must pre-book a swab (reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction) test at a laboratory operating in the Philippine airport
- They must abide by the passenger maximum capacity of their ports of entry
- The Bureau of Immigration was ordered to ensure the smooth implementation of the new rules.

The Department of Tourism, meanwhile, is tasked with ensuring adequate quarantine facilities for those who plan to enter the Philippines under these new rules.

Hotels have been used as quarantine facilities for Filipinos returning from abroad. While the government has shouldered the quarantine of overseas Filipino workers, others coming from abroad should foot the bill for their stay.

Those quarantined in hotels are allowed to leave only when they get a negative RT-PCR test result.

Rappler

Singapore

Singapore okays sale of lab-grown meat

Singapore has given US start-up Eat Just the greenlight to sell its lab-grown chicken meat, in what the



firm says is the world's first regulatory approval for so-called clean meat that does not come from slaughtered animals.

The meat, to be sold as nuggets, are to be priced at premium chicken prices when it first launches in a restaurant in Singapore "in the very near term," cofounder and CEO Josh Tetrick said.

Demand for alternatives to regular meat is surging due to concerns about health, animal welfare and the environment. Plant-based substitutes, popularized by the likes of Beyond Meat, Impossible Foods and Quorn, increasingly feature on supermarket shelves and restaurant menus.

However, so-called clean or cultured meat, which is grown from animal muscle cells in a lab, is still at a nascent stage given high production costs.

Singapore only produces about 10% of its food, but has set out ambitious plans to raise that over the next decade by supporting high-tech farming and new means of food production.

Josh Tetrick said that the San Francisco-based firm was also talking to US regulators, but Singapore was a "good bit" ahead of the US.

"I would imagine what will happen is the US, Western Europe and others will see what Singapore has been able to do, the rigors of the framework that they put together. And I would imagine that they will try to use it as a template to put their own framework together," he said in an interview.

The Singapore Food Agency said it had reviewed data relating to process, manufacturing control and safety testing before granting approval.

Reuters

Taiwan

Taiwan in talks to expand migrant labor pool



The government is seeking to allow the recruitment of migrant workers from a Southeast Asian nation that does not currently provide labor to Taiwan, Minister of Labor Hsu Ming-chun said on December 2.

Hsu made the remark in response to questions on whether the government plans to expand the number of countries from which Taiwan can hire migrant workers.

She confirmed that two discussions were held with representatives of the country last month to explore the possibility of making it easier for its nationals to work in Taiwan, but declined to name the nation.

Taiwan hopes to sign a memorandum of understanding with the country next year and allow recruitment by 2022, she said.

In October, there were 701,240 migrant workers in Taiwan, with 37.79% from Indonesia, 32.58% from Vietnam, 21.54% from the Philippines and 8.09% from Thailand, ministry data showed.

As of the end of October, there were 264,984 Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan, with 253,285 employed as caregivers and domestic workers, the data showed.

Responding to concerns that a two-week ban on Indonesian migrant workers due to a rise in imported



Policy Updates

COVID-19 cases could cause a shortage of migrant labor, Hsu said the government would mobilize all available resources to help caregiver agencies survive the temporary ban.

A Taiwanese caregiver-matching scheme operated by the ministry is also expected to ease the shortage, she said, adding that where necessary, employers of migrant workers could apply for short-term extensions for employees whose contracts are to expire.

Taipei Times

Vietnam

Vietnam pioneers post-pandemic carbon pricing

Having contained the COVID-19 pandemic, Vietnam is becoming the first developing country to adopt carbon pricing in the post-pandemic period to help guide a cleaner recovery.

On November 17, Vietnam's National Assembly passed the revised



Law on Environmental Protection legalising an emission trading scheme. The law will take effect on 1 January 2022.

The policy is expected to strengthen Vietnam's commitment to greenhouse gas emission reductions under the Paris Agreement on climate change. It paves the way for the country to further tap its significant renewable energy potential, and switch to a low-carbon development model in the post-COVID-19 recovery era.

The law stipulates that the government will establish a carbon emission trading scheme that suits the local context and complies with international climate change treaties.

Details such as targets, timelines and regulated industries will be specified later in a government decree.

The law also legalises enabling policies such as national greenhouse gas emission inventories, and the monitoring, reporting and verification of emissions.

By adopting carbon pricing, Vietnam will strengthen its position to reap additional benefits from free trade with the European Union.

Carbon pricing is a policy instrument that places a cost on greenhouse gases. With a carbon price in place, a market-based economy will have an incentive to steer itself in a low-emission direction.

By mid-2020, 61 carbon pricing initiatives had been implemented or scheduled for implementation worldwide. Before Vietnam, a handful of developing countries had adopted carbon pricing, including China, South Africa and Kazakhstan.

East Asia Forum

About CACCI

The Confederation of Asia-Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CACCI) is a regional grouping of apex national chambers of commerce and industry, business associations and business enterprises in Asia and the Western Pacific.

It is a non-governmental organization (NGO) serving as a forum for promoting the vital role of businessmen in the region, increasing regional business interaction, and enhancing regional economic growth. Since its establishment in 1966, CACCI has grown into

a network of national chambers of commerce with a total now of 29 Primary Members from 27 countries in the region. It cuts across national boundaries to link businessmen and promote economic growth throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

As an NGO, CACCI is granted consultative status, Roster category, under the United Nations. It is a member of the Conference on NGOs (CoNGO), an association

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