



CACCI Profile

Confederation of Asia-Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry

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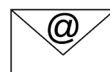
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PRESIDENT'S UPDATE



CACCI President Peter McMullin represented CACCI on the Transnational Chamber panel discussion during the 13th World Chambers Congress in Geneva.

Dear friends,

What a week last week was! As CACCI President, I attended the 13th World Chambers Congress in Geneva, Switzerland. The Congress had three major themes this year:

- Demystifying Multilateralism: How can we come together to maximise both personal and common concern for people and planet?
- Innovation by all and for all: How do we support entrepreneurs and innovators to build the inclusive and sustainable businesses for the future?
- Future-proof sustainability: How do we truly transition to a just and sustainable economy?

I was privileged to speak on a 'Transnational Chamber' panel discussion. The panel consisted of global chamber networks such as Junior Chambers International (JCI) as well as transnational chambers from Africa and the Middle-East. We discovered that we had much in common and much to add to the global debate around the role of chambers of commerce in the 21st century.



President McMullin (third from left) with VCCI President Adrian Kloeden (second from left) and the CIECA and CNAIC delegates from Taiwan.

energy generated, which increases sustainability and income for the chamber. A great example of sustainability and financial opportunity!

Perhaps the greatest highlight of the visit to Geneva was meeting with the delegation from our Primary Member organisations from Taiwan - the Chinese International Economic Cooperation Association (CIECA), Taiwan and the Chinese National Association of Industry and Commerce, Taiwan (CNAIC). It was good to spend some time with my CIECA and CNAIC friends after our recent visit to Taipei, and thank them for their warm hospitality.

During the closing ceremony, it was revealed that the Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) would be hosting the 2025 World Chambers Congress in my hometown of Melbourne. As former Deputy Lord Mayor of Melbourne and former President of VCCI, I look forward to welcoming you all to Australia.

In the meantime, I wish our Muslim colleagues a wonderful Eid-Al-Adha over the coming days.

Yours sincerely,

Peter McMullin AM
CACCI President

CACCI Elected Member of the Steering Committee of CoNGO's Regional Committee for Asia-Pacific



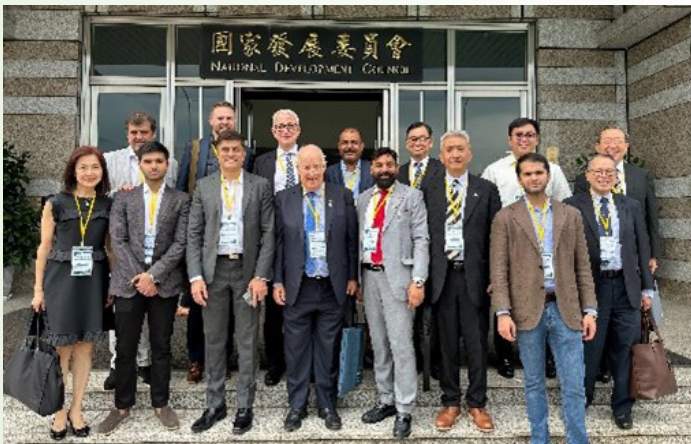
The Confederation of Asia-Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CACCI) has recently joined as member of the Steering Committee of the Regional Committee for Asia Pacific (RCAP) of the Conference on Non-Government organizations (CoNGO), an international organization of NGOs from around the world with Consultative Status under the United Nations, of which CACCI is a member.

RCAP elected CACCI to the Steering

Committee during RCAP's meeting on May 19, 2023 in Bangkok, Thailand. RCAP recognized CACCI's very important work in the Asia-Pacific Region and its acknowledged status in civil society and business circles, and of course its positive responses to RCAP initiatives.

Currently composed on nine members (with CACCI as the latest one to join), the RCAP aims to facilitate Asia-Pacific NGOs' participation in all UN and CoNGO activities globally and regionally. It will cooperate with UN.ESCAP and other UN bodies and agencies in Asia and the Pacific. It will promote better cooperation among CoNGO members as well as other civil society organizations in Asia-Pacific.

President McMullin Leads Successful Visits to Taiwan and Vietnam



CACCI President Mr. Peter McMullin AM and representatives from various CACCI Primary Members visited Taipei and Hanoi on May 17-18 and May 22-23, respectively, to meet with officers of CACCI Primary and Affiliate Members in Taiwan and Vietnam as well as to make courtesy calls on local key government officials and other



organizations involved in promoting trade and investment cooperation between Taiwan and other countries. The CACCI delegation also visited local business enterprises to obtain information on their products and services and other related activities and explore possible areas of business cooperation.

The Taiwan and Vietnam trips were the

first Presidential visits led by Mr. McMullin since he assumed the CACCI Presidency in November 2022 in Melbourne, Australia. The Presidential visits are intended to give the CACCI President and CACCI members the opportunity to gather first-hand information on the business situation in the host country; further build up the image of CACCI by making courtesy calls on key government officials; and meet business leaders in the country, particularly those from industries or sectors that the host country wishes to promote.

The two-day visits provided the delegation the opportunity to strengthen ties between CACCI and Taiwanese and Vietnamese government officials and business sector, and to seek their support for the Confederation and its activities. During their various meetings with private and government sector representatives in the two countries, Mr. McMullin and members of his delegation introduced CACCI, elaborating on the Confederation's objectives and what it does to encourage cooperation among businessmen in the region. They also exchanged views on the local business conditions; areas of opportunities for business, trade and investment; and policies set in place by the Taiwanese and Vietnamese governments to attract foreign investors.

The CACCI delegation was composed mostly of some 20 chamber executives and businessmen from eight CACCI member countries – including Australia, Georgia, Hong Kong, Iran, Korea, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Taiwan - looking at possible business and investment opportunities or considering expansion of their existing businesses in Taiwan and Vietnam or to invite them to consider their respective countries as an investment destination for Taiwanese and Vietnamese investors.

The program of the Taiwan visit was arranged by the Chinese International Economic Cooperation Association (CIECA), with the support of the Chinese National Association of Industry and Commerce (CNAIC) and the Importers and Exporters Association of Taipei (IEAT), while the Vietnam visit program was arranged by the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

During the Taiwan visit, CACCI President McMullin had the opportunity to make a courtesy call on President Tsai Ing-wen of the Republic of China (ROC), Taiwan.



In her Welcome Remarks for Mr. McMullin, President Tsai said that the nations included in Taiwan's New Southbound Policy maintain engagement with CACCI and are key external trade partners for Taiwan. She also said that she looks forward

to continuing Taiwan's close cooperation with the Confederation to bolster connectivity among Asia-Pacific nations and make even greater contributions to the region's economy and development.

In response to President Tsai's Welcome Remarks, President McMullin said that his delegation has been impressed by what they have seen in Taiwan and that the hospitality they have received has been exceptional. He said that the business-like nature of Taiwan is very much a comfort for the delegation members and that they have found it very easy to engage with organizations and government agencies in Taiwan.

President McMullin stated that his presidency, under the framework of CACCI, is based on three principles of Sustainability, Entrepreneurship, and Trade. He added that CACCI is working with regional and global organizations including the G20 and European chambers of commerce. Thanking the Taiwanese government

for its support, President McMullin expressed his belief that “through our collaboration, we can achieve a great deal.”

This was essentially the same message that President McMullin conveyed to the relevant government agencies and private sector organizations that the CACCI delegation visited in Vietnam.

Among the highlights of the Vietnam visit was the dinner hosted by Pakistan’s Ambassador to Vietnam H. E. Samina Mehtab; the meeting with officers and members of VCCI led by Chairman and President Mr. Pham Tan Cong; the meeting with high-level officials of the Ministry of Industry and Trade, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural

Development; Ministry of Planning and Investment; visit to the Kinh Bac City (KBC) Group, which is considered the leading enterprise in Vietnam in terms of investment, development, construction and business of industrial park and urban infrastructure; and a meeting with the Australian Embassy in Vietnam where they learned about the strong presence of Australia in Vietnam’s economy. The various Ministries thanked CACCI for its strong support of the Vietnamese economy through the involvement of VCCI, and expressed their continued commitment to help the Confederation achieve regional cooperation among the business community in Asia Pacific.

PCCI Hosts Investment Forum on the Philippines



The Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) and the Confederation of Asia-Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CACCI) jointly organized an Investment Forum on the Philippines on June 20, 2023, 2:00 PM, Manila Time.

The 90-minute online Forum focused on the theme “Philippines: An Enviably Destination for Foreign Investments”. It featured speakers from both the Philippine government and business sectors who made presentations on the current economic situation in the Philippines and the trade, investment, and business opportunities to foreign investors and companies.

The speakers and their respective topics included the following:

- Dr. Ceferino Rodolfo, Vice Chairman and Managing Head, Board of Investments, Department of Trade and Industry (Doing

Business in the Philippines)

- Mr. Perry E. Ferrer, Vice President for Industrial Affairs / Director, Digital Science and Technology, Philippine Chamber of Commerce, and Industry (Information Technology / Innovation)
- Arch, Felino A. Palafox, Jr., Vice President for Trade Affairs and Director for Environment and Natural Resources and Climate Change, PCCI (Infrastructure / Smart City)
- Mr. Salvador Salacup, Co-Chair, Agriculture Committee, PCCI (Agriculture)
- Ms. Lisa S. Go, Chief, Investment Promotion Office, Department of Energy (Renewable Energy)
- Mr. Tereso O. Panga, Director General, Philippine Economic Zone Authority (Investment Opportunities in Ecozones)

The Forum opened with a Welcome Remarks by Mr. George T. Barcelon, President of PCCI, followed with the Opening Remarks by Mr. Peter McMullin AM, President, CACCI

The Closing Remarks were given by Mr. Jude G. Aguilar, Chairman, International Affairs Department and Co-Chairman, 49th PBC&E Organizing Committee, PCCI.

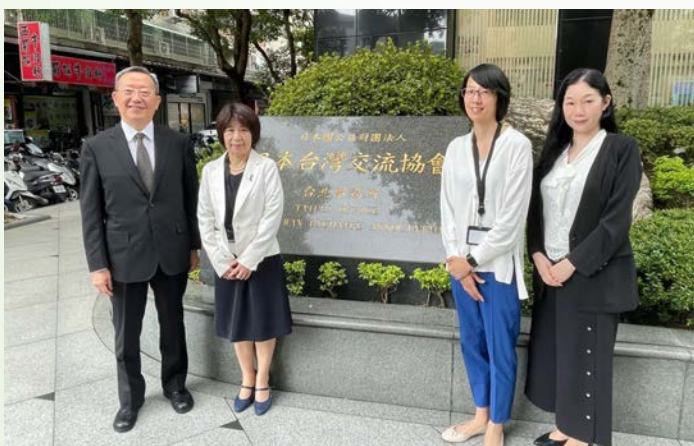
New Zealand Representative in Taiwan Calls on CACCI Secretariat



Mr. Mark Pearson, Director, New Zealand Commerce and Industry Office in Taipei (center), visited the CACCI Secretariat headquarters on June 6 and met with CACCI Director-General Mr. David Hsu (2nd from left) and other Secretariat officers

Deputy Director-General Mr. Amador Honrado (3rd from right), Deputy Director-General Mr. Mig Moreno (leftmost), Senior Officer Ms. Abby Moreno (rightmost), and Senior Officer Ms. Teresa Liu (2nd from right). The meeting provided the Secretariat the opportunity to give Mr. Pearson a brief introduction on CACCI and the participation of the New Zealand Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NZCCI) and the Wellington Chamber of Commerce (WCC) in CACCI activities over the years, as well as the upcoming activities that CACCI is co-organizing with the two chambers for the rest of the year. Mr. Pearson expressed his strong support for CACCI and offered his assistance in promoting the Confederation's programs to enhance regional economic cooperation.

CACCI Director-General Meets with the Japanese Representatives in Taiwan



Ms. Mayumi Eda, Director for Economic Affairs, and Ms. Yuko Arita, Chief, Trade Inquiry Unit and Director for Economic Affairs at the Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association Taipei Office, received CACCI Director General Mr. David Hsu on June 9, 2023 at their headquarters.

Mr. Hsu, who was accompanied by Ms. Yumiko Ebata, Vice President, Corporate Relations Department, CTBC Bank Co., Ltd, briefed Ms. Eda and Ms. Arita on the programs of CACCI and highlighted the active involvement of the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI) since the Confederation was established in 1966 with JCCI as one of its Founding members. Among others, Mr. Hsu informed that JCCI has hosted 10 annual gathering of CACCI and two CACCI Presidential visit, and that four of the past CACCI Presidents were from Japan.

Ms. Eda and Ms. Arita expressed his appreciation for the work of CACCI and its efforts in helping the Japanese business community – through JCCI – reach out into the Asian market.

Japan YEG Officers Visit CACCI Secretariat



Officers and members of The Young Entrepreneurs Group of the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Japan YEG) visited the CACCI Secretariat headquarters in Taipei on January 28, 2023. Led by Mr. Hiromi Aoki, member of the Executive Committee of Young Entrepreneurs Group of Asia-Pacific (YEGAP) established under the CACCI umbrella, the visiting group was briefed by CACCI Secretariat officers headed by Director-General David Hsu on CACCI and its activities, as well as on the history and background of YEGAP, its current membership, its organizational structure, and its recent and upcoming activities and programs. They were also each given a YEGAP pin. Following the meeting, the visiting group was hosted lunch by the CACCI Secretariat. Members of Japan YEG was in Taipei to attend the formal inauguration on January 27 of Mr. Richard Lin, also a member of the Executive Committee of YEGAP, as the new Chairman of the Young Entrepreneurs Group of the Third Wednesday Club of Taiwan, a well-established and foremost business organization in the island that aims to expand economic interaction between Taiwan and other countries, particularly Japan and mainland China.



NEWS UPDATES

Southeast Asia: A hotbed of business opportunities waiting to be explored



Southeast Asia is home to over 655 million people, making it the third most populous region in the world after China and India.

The region has a combined GDP of over \$3 trillion, making it the fifth-largest economy in the

world.

Southeast Asia is a significant exporter of electronics, textiles, and agricultural products such as rice, palm oil, and rubber.

The manufacturing sector is a key driver of

economic growth in the region. Countries such as Vietnam, Indonesia, and Thailand have seen significant growth in manufacturing output in recent years.

The region is also home to a growing startup ecosystem, with countries such as Singapore and Indonesia emerging as hubs for innovation and entrepreneurship.

It's important to note that while Southeast Asia is a significant market, there are significant differences in the economic and industrial landscape between individual countries within the region.

Expanding a business into Asia presents both expected and unexpected challenges, but it also offers similarities with growing a business in other parts of the world. The region is diverse, with every country being unique, and each has different languages, histories, business practices, and varying levels of technological development. For technology companies that have only partially mastered their home markets, this can present a considerable challenge to internationalization. However, European companies used to dealing with similar diversity in their neighborhoods may find many aspects of growing a business in Asia familiar.

There are ten points to consider when expanding a business in Asia that can make a substantial difference, such as recognizing Southeast Asia's rapid growth and market size, which is growing at an unparalleled pace in other parts of the world. There is also an excellent opportunity for European companies because they are already familiar with the diversity in the region.

Building a local team can also be challenging, and finding the right personnel who can work alone or from home may be challenging. Companies must also be ready to support the region adequately, including conveying to potential customers that they have the necessary resources to deliver. Intangibles such as trust, culture, and environment also take time to develop, and having a team on the ground can be of immense value.

1. **Rapid Growth:** Southeast Asia is experiencing a pace of growth not seen in other parts of the world. The region's technology sector is growing double, and internet and social media penetration are far higher than in many other areas. This presents a significant opportunity for companies to tap into a rapidly growing market.

2. **Market Size:** The population of Southeast Asia is over 600 million, which is a significant market size for companies looking to expand. The region has the highest mobile penetration globally, with over 141 connections per 100 people.

3. **Diversity of the Market:** Southeast Asia is an incredibly diverse region, with every country being very different, and even within each country, there are many communities with other languages, histories, and business practices. However, this diversity can be an advantage for companies used to doing business in different parts of the world. European companies, in particular, can find this diversity familiar, as they are used to dealing with similar diversity in their home markets.

4. **Lower Cost of Doing Business:** Compared to other regions, the cost of doing business in Southeast Asia is relatively low. This can be advantageous for companies looking to expand and grow their business.

5. **Access to Talent:** Southeast Asia has a large and growing talent pool. Many countries in the region are investing heavily in education and technology, creating a highly skilled workforce. This presents an opportunity for companies to tap into this talent pool and access highly skilled and motivated employees.

The industrial statistics for the Southeast Asia market vary by country and sector. However, here are some vital industrial statistics for the region as a whole:

In conclusion, Southeast Asia is a region full of opportunities for companies looking to expand their business. The region's rapid growth, large market size, diversity, lower cost of doing business, and access to talent make it an attractive market for companies looking to grow their business.

LinkedIn Marketing Capability Centre

Asia-Pacific's highly skilled digital workers earn up to 65% more than their peers, survey shows



Workers in Asia-Pacific who have advanced digital skills potentially earn up to 65% more than those who do not use digital skills at work, according to a new report by workplace consultancy Gallup and Amazon Web Services.

That's comparing workers with the same educational background and years of working experience.

Advanced digital skills refer to skills in complex areas such as software or application development, artificial intelligence and machine learning. Cloud architects and software developers are considered advanced digital workers.

Digitally skilled workers — those with advanced skills as well as those with basic or intermediate skills like email and word processing — add approximately \$4.7 trillion to the region's annual gross domestic product, according to the Asia Pacific 2023 Digital Skills report.

"Organizations in the APAC region that employ advanced digital workers — such as software developers or cloud architects — report 2021 annual revenues 150% higher than organizations that employ only basic digital workers, and 286% higher than those that employ intermediate digital workers," the report said.

More than 30,000 employees and 9,000 employers across 19 countries participated in the survey. Respondents were from countries including Australia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea, and Thailand.

Higher salaries

The findings revealed the more highly

skilled digital workers are, on average, drawing 58% higher wages than their peers who do not use digital skills at all.

Even workers who use basic digital skills such as emailing or word processing earn 39% more than those who do not use any digital skill at work.

This is more pronounced in Singapore and Indonesia, where employees who use any level of digital skills are earning 97% and 93% higher wages respectively, compared to their non-digital peers, according to the report.

Gallup estimates that 72% of workers in Asia-Pacific do not use a computer at work, and as much as 83% of India's workforce are non-digital. For the 28% who actually use a computer, only 8% use advanced digital skills while 14% use basic digital skills.

Close to half of digital workers surveyed said that a higher pay motivates them to seek out additional digital skills training. Advanced digital workers in Indonesia are twice as likely to be highly satisfied with their jobs as compared to basic digital workers.

On the other hand, job satisfaction of basic digital and advanced digital workers are nearly on par in high-income countries such as Australia and Japan.

A challenge to hire degree holders

The report further revealed that 72% of employers in Asia-Pacific find it challenging to hire digitally skilled workers.

This is partly because of strict bachelor's degree requirements for those job openings.

While almost two-thirds, or 63%, of the most advanced digital workers possess digital certifications, they do not have a bachelor's degree. This makes them ineligible to apply for the jobs, despite having the skills required.

Digital workers in Asia-Pacific are about twice as likely to hold digital certifications than degrees, said AWS and Gallup.

Many companies in the region are aware that they are narrowing the hiring pool due to the

strict degree requirements, and are trying to adjust their hiring practices.

“This is an important development, as digital workers in the Asia Pacific region are about twice as likely to hold a digital certification (50%) as they are to hold a bachelor’s degree (27%),” the report said.

“By relaxing the degree requirements of their job openings, organizations that allow digital certifications or trainings to substitute or complement degrees may be more than doubling the pool of digital workers who are eligible to apply for these roles.”

Some 38% of companies in the region want

to hire degree holders for entry-level tech roles, but only 27% of Asia’s digital workers have a bachelor’s degree.

The countries that found it most difficult to hire digital workers — namely Thailand, India, Indonesia, and Malaysia — are the most likely to require degrees for entry-level tech jobs.

Meanwhile, more advanced economies like Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, and Japan have looser degree requirements for tech workers despite having large proportions of university graduates in their workforces.

CNBC

CACCI VP Khurram Tariq Sayeed calls on TAITRA President



Khurram Tariq Sayeed, Vice President Confederation of Asia Pacific Chambers of Commerce & Industry (CACCI) and Former Vice President of the Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) along with Pakistan Delegates & DG CACCI David Hsu called on Simon Wang, CEO & President of the Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA), at his office in Taipei on May 19.

The two discussed in detail various initiatives TAITRA has taken over the years to increase bilateral trade between Taiwan and Pakistan. TAITRA and FPCCI have also signed a MOU for cooperation in the past. Mr. Wang said that TAITRA will be sending a delegation of Taiwanese businesspersons to Pakistan shortly and Mr. Sayeed assured him that FPCCI will facilitate and extend all possible cooperation to the delegates. The two sides also discussed the possibility of participation of Pakistani businesspersons in the trade shows being held in Taiwan under TAITRA.



CACCI VP Khurram Tariq Sayeed, along with Pakistan Delegates & CACCI DG CACCI David Hsu with TAITRA CEO & President Simon Wang in Taipei

Inflation retreat will bring some comfort to small business: ACCI

Fresh inflation numbers will offer some consolation to Australia's 2.4 million small business owners, many of whom are nearing breaking point as price pressures and elevated interest rates increase the risk of further economic pain.

"After experiencing 12 interest rate increases, declining consumer spending, and a surge in input costs, it's good news for small businesses that inflation is returning to its downward trend," ACCI chief of policy and advocacy David Alexander said.

"As supply chain bottlenecks ease, small businesses have experienced a decline in petrol prices while material costs have also steadily decreased from previously high levels.

"Despite this welcome progress, the expected inflation-chasing wages hike from July 1 will

heap even more pressure on small businesses when they can least afford it.

"Many small businesses are seeing their costs rise to the point where they have no choice but to increase their prices to maintain operations.

"With further disruption on the horizon as the federal government pursues retrograde changes to the industrial relations system, small businesses across the country are questioning why laws that will make it harder to create new jobs and grow the economy are needed.

"At its meeting next week, the Reserve Bank should take stock of whether rates are sufficiently restrictive to bring inflation back to target.

ACCI Newsroom

FICCI and HUL partner to establish 'Centre for Sustainability Leadership'



The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) announced setting up of the 'Centre for Sustainability Leadership' with Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL)

as its Founding Member. The ambition of the Centre is to help accelerate India Inc.'s climate action in line with Government's net-zero commitments embodied in the 'Panchamrit' framework. The Centre aims to institutionalize sustainability leader-

ship across FICCI members focusing particularly on decarbonization, green entrepreneurship, and nature-based solutions.

The Centre will serve as a catalyst for change, by facilitating sustainability journey of corporate India, including small and medium enterprises (SMEs), start-ups and large corporates. It will endeavour to mainstream climate technology solutions by showcasing innovations by sustainability startups in India. The Centre will also work towards adoption of sustainable consumption and circular economy in line with Government's 'Mission LiFE' mantra. Acknowledging PM Narendra Modi's vision that 'Lifestyle for Environment' needs to become a mass movement, the Centre will help companies adopt pathways that promote sustainable consumption, sustainable production, and sustainable lifestyles.

The Centre's goals will be achieved by build-

ing capacity of Corporate India through intensive training programs, expert workshops and offering bespoke solutions for climate action. In addition, the Centre will also create a 'Knowledge & Information Hub' featuring global best sustainability practices, emerging policies, and innovative climate technologies. It will also support companies in complying with enhanced reporting and disclosure obligations on Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) indicators including direct / indirect greenhouse gas emissions, energy efficiency, and waste management, etc.

The Centre ultimately aims to unite a community of practitioners, experts, and sustainability leaders, creating a powerful force for change in the fight against climate change.

HUL



First board of directors meeting of FBCCI Innovation, Research Centre held

The FBCCI Innovation and Research Center, a pioneering venture initiated by FBCCI, held its inaugural board of directors meeting on June 21 at a hotel in the capital.

The Initiative aimed to address the challenges of the fourth industrial revolution and foster growth in the private sector through research and policy support.

Salman F Rahman, Prime Minister's Private Industry and Investment Adviser, attended the meeting as the chief guest. He emphasized the timely significance of the Innovation and Research Center in the current business landscape and highlighted its pivotal role in advancing the country's

development by empowering the private sector through research-driven policies, said a press release today.

The Chairman of the Board of Directors of the FBCCI Innovation and Research Centre and FBCCI President Md Jashim Uddin presided over the meeting.

Md Jashim Uddin expressed his confidence that the FBCCI Innovation and Research Center would accelerate the ongoing progress of the nation, led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

He further emphasized the institution's vital contribution to propelling the private sector forward and thus providing essential policy support through robust research initiatives.

During the meeting, the board of directors finalized the draft of the proposed Memorandum of Association and Rules & Regulations.

Business Post



CACCI VP Khurram Tariq Sayeed meets with Former President of Pakistan

Mr. Asif Ali Zardari, Former President of Pakistan and Co-Chairman of the Pakistan People's Party recently paid a visit to the Lahore office of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI). Khurram Tariq Sayeed, CACCI Vice President and former FPCCI Vice President, briefed the former president on CACCI and its activities. They also discussed in detail the issues being faced by foreign investors in general and in particular in the Sindh Province, especially in the Renewable Energy Sector among others. Former President assured to resolve all issues impending investments in the Sindh province.

FNCCI proposes BIMSTEC Business Forum to boost intra-regional trade



The Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FNCCI) President Chandra Prasad Dhakal floated the idea for the formation of the BIMSTEC Business Forum to boost intra-region trade and investments in the member countries among their private sector.

Speaking at the Special Plenary Session of the International Trade Forum during the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Business Conclave in Calcutta, India, President Dhakal said as the private sector is involved in trade and investment, the formation of a business forum would achieve commercial success.

He further said that to foster regional trade and investments, there is a need for an efficient and effective infrastructure such as land, waterway, rail, air and digital connectivity.

“We need to jointly invest to improve the existing connectivity infrastructure and also build new ones for better connectivity.”

Similarly, enhancing physical infrastructure, such as roads, ports, and logistics facilities was essential for the efficient movement of goods within the region, he said, adding, joint efforts could be made to develop and upgrade infrastructure to support the development of regional value chains.

“Promoting cross-border energy cooperation, including the development of energy infrastructure and efficient energy trade can support the growth of energy-intensive industries within the regional value chains.

For example, Nepal- Bangladesh and India have been working on hydropower transmission

lines, to export electricity produced in Nepal, to Bangladesh, via India. “The success of such a project can be expanded to other BIMSTEC nations and beyond as well,” Dhakal said.

In addition to connectivity infrastructure, BIMSTEC countries need to remove and reduce the various non-tariff barriers for trade, making the regional trade and investments smooth.

BIMSTEC nations can work towards aligning their trade and investment policies to create a conducive environment for regional value chains. “This can involve streamlining customs procedures, simplifying regulations and promoting investment facilitation measures,” said Dhakal.

He added: “The free trading arrangement in the region can facilitate increased bilateral and multilateral trade among the member countries. Nepal can benefit from the removal or reduction of tariffs for its exports, leading to a boost in trade volumes and diversification of its export base.”

Dhakal said the regional connectivity and free trade agreements would also help attract foreign direct investments (FDI).

“Smooth and strong regional connectivity and free trade arrangement will help attract FDI. Improved market access and reduced trade barriers will encourage foreign companies to invest in various sectors of the economy, leading to economic growth and job creation in the BIMSTEC countries,” he added.

The share of all BIMSTEC countries — that include two ASEAN member-states - Thailand and Myanmar — is less than 4 percent in world trade.

The BIMSTEC intra-regional trade was at \$70 billion in 2021, significantly lower than ASEAN’s \$600 billion.

The BIMSTEC members have agreed to establish the BIMSTEC Free Trade Area Framework Agreement in order to stimulate trade and investments. BIMSTEC countries’ existing trade and investment profiles are overwhelmingly influenced by their levels of economic development, geographical proximity, cross-border logistic facilities and different regional cooperation agreements.

Kathmandu Post

Business chambers of Korea, Japan agree to cooperate on expo bid

대한상공회의소 - 일본상공회의소 경제협력 간담회 日本商工会議所-大韓商工会議所 経済協力懇談会

2023. 4. 10(월) 16:30

대한상공회의소



Business chambers of Korea and Japan agreed to work together to realize Busan's bid to host the 2030 World Expo and a successful opening of the same event in Osaka in 2025.

The agreement was reached between the Korea Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) and the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI) in a joint statement adopted during their chairs' meeting in Busan, the KCCI said.

The meeting marked the first such gathering between the two business chambers in six years. It had been suspended since 2018 amid deteriorating bilateral relations over a dispute stemming from Japan's 1910-1945 colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula.

Bilateral ties have warmed after Korea proposed compensating the Korean victims of Japan's wartime forced labor without contributions from accused Japanese companies in March.

"[The KCCI] will actively participate in the Osaka-Kansai Expo in 2025, and the [JCCI] will actively cooperate to attract the Busan World Expo in 2030," the statement read.

Korea is competing against Italy, Ukraine and Saudi Arabia to host the World Expo in 2030, with the winner to be announced in November.

In the joint statement, the organizations agreed to promote cooperation in economic security, including rebuilding the supply chains, achieving carbon neutrality and cooperating on artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and others.

They agreed to bolster exchanges in tourism, culture and education in line with the post-pandemic recovery and border reopening

KCCI Chair Chey Tae-won and JCCI Chair Ken Kobayashi attended Friday's meeting, accompanied by the heads of the regional business chambers of the two countries.

The KCCI and JCCI agreed to host the next chairs' meeting in Osaka in 2024.

Korea Joong Ang Daily

Singapore Manufacturing Federation appoints CEO and CSO

The Singapore Manufacturing Federation (SMF) said on May 25 that it has appointed Dennis Mark as its chief executive officer effective Jun 15.

The federation said in a statement that it has re-designated the position of secretary-general to CEO. SMF's website shows that the role of secretary-general is vacant. The position was previously occupied by Lawrence Pek.

SMF said Mark has more than 20 years of experience in the manufacturing sector in multinational corporations under the HP group.

The federation also announced that it has appointed Clement Teo as its first chief sustainability officer (CSO) and assistant chief executive effective Jun 5. SMF said Teo has led sales and operational teams across the Asean region in TUV-SUD, an organisation in the testing, inspection and certification industry.

SMF president Lennon Tan said the new appointments will "bring a new focus on new ideas to bring new benefits to SMF members".

"The appointment of SMF's first CSO will also add expertise to the SMF in an area which manufacturers large and small will require to remain competitive in the global arena," he said.

The Business Times

PCCI backs land reform debt write off

The Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) said it is backing the enactment of a proposed law that will condone some P57 billion in debt incurred by land reform beneficiaries, signaling strong support from the private sector for a measure that is currently awaiting approval by President Marcos.

"The New Agrarian Emancipation Act is expected to provide much-needed financial relief to the agricultural reform beneficiaries to allow farmers freed from debt to devote more resources to their land," PCCI president George Barcelon, whose business association touts itself as the largest in the country, said in an online forum.

"Hopefully, the enactment of this measure will help in the development of farms, increase productivity and advance an agriculture-driven economy," he added.

Barcelon also noted that the weakest link in Philippine socioeconomic development is agriculture, adding that it has continued to decline in terms of contribution to the country's overall economic output which is now pegged at around 9 percent.

The PCCI official cited that the services sector has expanded significantly, contributing 61 percent, while the industry sector has a share of 30 percent.

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority, the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector accounted for only 8.9 percent of the Philippines' gross domestic product (GDP) in 2022, the lowest in five years.

"Putting this into perspective, agriculture accounted for one-quarter of the country's GDP during the 1980s and almost one-third in the 1970s. We were a net exporter of agricultural products in the 1980s but as of the 1990s, we have become net importers as exports fell behind, outpaced by imports," Barcelon said, but noted that the sector still provides employment for 25 percent of the country's labor force.

Barcelon pointed out that restrictions under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law have put farmers in grave states of indebtedness through the

erosion of the value of their lands, limited access to credit and constrained the transfer of land to more productive uses, among others.

The Partido Federal ng Pilipinas, which is led by President Marcos as national chair, had recently cited the benefits of letting the chief executive continue to lead the Department of Agriculture.

"This is because the President knows what to do and apparently has the solutions needed to address problems in the agriculture sector," South Cotabato Gov. Reynaldo Sucayan Tamayo Jr., who stands as the party president, said last week.

Philippine Daily Inquirer

Trade Minister pledges to support Kadin's ASEAN-BAC chairmanship



Trade Minister Zulkifli Hasan has pledged to support the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry's (Kadin's) chairmanship of the ASEAN-Business Advisory Council (ASEAN-BAC) this year.

"I support ASEAN-BAC Indonesia in implementing its priority programs and their derivatives during this year's chairmanship period. I also fully support the holding of the ASEAN Business and Investment Summit and Roundtable Dialogue Series in September 2023," Hasan said in a written statement released in Jakarta.

The minister also welcomed the advisory council's efforts to intensify consultation and advocacy with ASEAN governments in a bid to establish stronger lines of cooperation and collaboration between governments and private players.

He also called for ASEAN-BAC's support for Indonesia's ASEAN chairmanship this year, particu-

larly the Trade Ministry's efforts to realize the seven priority economic deliverables (PEDs).

The PEDs include the ASEAN Services Facilitation Framework (ASFF), the signing of the Second Protocol to Amend the Agreement Establishing the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (AANZFTA), and the establishment of a supporting unit for the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) at the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta.

The deliverables also include the development of ASEAN Industrial Project-Based Initiatives as well as the full implementation of electronic certificates of origin for imported commodities (e-Form D) through a regional electronic economic platform called ASEAN Single Window.

The remaining two PEDs concern the Leader's Statement on Developing the ASEAN Digital Economy Framework (DEFA) and the Roadmap of ASEAN Harmonized Standards to Support Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Implementation.

"I also expect ASEAN-BAC to provide suggestions and support to Indonesia in finding joint solu-

tions to address various market access obstacles being faced by business actors," Hasan stated.

Minister Hasan also sought support from the council in the country's efforts to complete four priority negotiations, namely negotiations on upgrading the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA), ASEAN China FTA (ACFTA), the finalization of ASEAN Canada FTA (ACAFTA), and RCEP implementation.

He informed that after the consultation meeting between ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) and ASEAN-BAC, Indonesia will launch the "New ASEAN Tariff Finder" platform that will replace the current tariff finder.

The platform is a search engine that will provide business actors with information on tariffs, non-tariffs, rules of origin (ROO), ASEAN export-import regulations, and ASEAN's trade agreements with its partner countries.

The consultation meeting is scheduled to take place in September 2023 on the sidelines of the 43rd ASEAN Summit.

Antara News

MEMBER PERSONALITIES

Rifat Hisarciklioglu re-elected President of TOBB

The General Assembly of the Union of Turkic Chambers of Commerce and Industry (TOBB) was held in Istanbul with the participation of representatives of the business world of Türkiye, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Hungary, Turkmenistan and the TRNC and hosted by the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye (TOBB).

As a result of the election held at the Gener-

al Assembly, TOBB President M. Rifat Hisarcıklıoğlu was unanimously re-elected as the President of the Union of Turkic Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

Hisarcıklıoğlu, stating that they will continue to work to develop and strengthen the economic relations between the member countries, said, "I would like to thank you for the trust and kindness shown to me."

Hisarcıklioğlu, emphasizing that they should first increase trade by removing trade barriers between member states, said, "We should also write an EU-like integration success story. I see the Organization of Turkic States and our Union as strategically important steps that will enable us to achieve this goal. Thus, the solidarity between us will increase even more and new possibilities of cooperation will develop. I believe that if we join hands, if our governments and the business world work together, the Turkic world will also write new success stories."

TOBB

New ICCIMA President Elected



Hossein Selahvarzi has been elected the new head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture. He will be at the helm of the chamber for the next four years, replacing Gholam-hossein Shafei.

The election of the new president came after a March vote for new members. "The government had no intervention in the process of election," Selahvarzi was quoted as saying by IRNA.

At a press conference following his election, he noted that transparency will be top the agenda of ICCIMA under his leadership and the chamber's organizational structure should be reformed.

Selahvarzi underlined the importance of

re-inviting European businesses after their pull-back from the Iranian market as a result of the US sanctions.

ICCIMA, known as "private sector parliament" is a 140-year-old institution and represents Iran's private businesses.

Describing chambers of commerce as "the only honest observers" of policymaking developments and economic trends in Iran, Mohsen Jalalpour, former president of ICCIMA, said despite all the criticisms leveled at them, they can play a key role in making correct economic decisions and sending important signals from the private sector to the policymaking system.

"The estimates and analyses of the chambers of commerce are vital, if decision-makers are willing to design a win-win game for all economic players. The point is that the representatives of this large organization are members of different manufacturing, commercial, industrial and mining sectors. Contrary to what is believed, the members of the chamber are not from a specific trade and do not have common interests. Therefore, if competent people make up the chamber's board, they can be vigilant watchers for the country's business environment and work to consolidate important economic concepts such as competition and ownership," he wrote for the Persian economic daily Donya-e-Eqtasad.

Jalalpour believes the main mission of the chamber is monitoring the business environment and not bargaining to gain more privileges and benefits.

"The leading members of the chambers should be the voice of the real private sector that does not seek to acquire wealth through privileges and rent-seeking practices. Therefore, the representative of the chamber should have the ability to distinguish between decent demands from rent-seeking demands," he said.

Financial Tribune

SPECIAL FEATURE

Four Ways to Effectively Communicate in Times of Crisis



By Deena Harvanek, Change and Communication Solutions Leader, Partner at Mercer

“Unprecedented times” is a phrase we’ve tired of hearing. But the fact remains that we continue to experience extraordinary situations at home and abroad. How effectively you communicate to your employees in these moments will have a profound and long-lasting impact.

From climate change catastrophes, a global pandemic and Russia’s recent invasion of Ukraine, it is difficult to recall what “normal” — or even a “new normal” — should feel like. While every generation experiences these types of events, it does not make them any less unsettling. As individuals, we’re all dealing with something. As organizations, we multiply “something” by a factor of employees, plus their family, friends and networks. The resulting answer helps to realize the full force of any crisis on your company and the people depending on you. Then, you have to deal with it.

I know, that’s easier said than done. No script, playbook or tried-and-true template exists for managing through the crises we face today. Information is everywhere, some of it true, some not. The people of Ukraine, for example, are recording their reality in real time and sharing it with the world. While there is no easy answer, consider these four steps to leading your organization through this — and future — crises.

Lead With a Point of View

Ensure that those who depend on you have a clear understanding of the organization’s stance and what it’s doing to support those impacted. Effectively communicating these messages will take effort and courage. Your position must be bold and clear. Developing a key message platform and cascading communication plan aimed at delivering

messages with a common voice can build confidence and trust throughout the organization.

Exercise Empathy

In any time of crisis, basic survival instincts kick in. In the workplace, this may manifest as concerns about job security, the ability to care for family, and available resources to manage through a tough time. The crisis in Ukraine may affect people in unexpected ways. You may have colleagues or business partners directly in harm’s way. Or, some colleagues may have family impacts. Sometimes, the effects are subtle. For instance, my twelve-year-old asked what he needed to do if he heard a big airplane fly overhead. Should he get in the bathtub and cover up, as he does when we have tornado warnings? Knowing he is experiencing stress about the crisis, in turn, creates stress for me. It has been two decades since a foreign terrorist attack on U.S. soil, but when I hear questions like this from my son, I go right back to the place I was when I heard of the 9/11 attacks. It triggers fear and anxiety. When we lead with empathy and pull people close, we build spaces of refuge from fear and anxiety. As leaders, we need to “show up” for employees with empathy, even if you don’t have all the answers.

Communicate, Communicate, Communicate

Having open lines of communication and regular contact points within your organization is important at all times, but even more so during a crisis. If you haven’t already, create avenues for two-way communication. Be transparent and real about the impacts the current crisis is having on the company, on employees and on you personally. Provide your leadership team, human resource professionals and people managers with talking points and a

list of resources available to help employees navigate through this crisis. Remind employees about the mental health and support programs available through their benefits program and put this information at their fingertips with quick guides and links. There is a real sense of urgency to provide help now, so remember that intent counts more than perfection.

Prepare for What's Next

As we realized over the last several months, a true global crisis can last much longer than expected. Natural disasters? Still here. COVID-19? Still here. For the sake of the people of Ukraine and all impacted, I hope this ends quickly. Unfortunately, history shows us that even if the actual attack is short lived, the ripple effect around the globe will last for years to come. By now, nobody is questioning whether another crisis will come in our lifetime. Instead we ask: When? And what? To safeguard your employee experience today in preparation for the next crisis:

Shore up your mission, vision and values.

Creating a strong story aligned with the organization's direction — and telling it often — will become a foundation from which to lead your organization through any crisis.

Evaluate and modernize your employee

value proposition (EVP). The world of work has dramatically changed over the past several months. Proactively modernizing your EVP and realigning messages to articulate why your organization is still the best place to work will allow you to maintain a strong employment deal and help you attract, retain and engage key talent — even during the rockiest of times.

Build for resiliency. Create business resilience playbooks to prepare for the future of work. Integrating effective employee communication avenues is critical to executing on continuity plans during a crisis. Use digital communication platforms to connect with people at any time. Create two-way communication channels in order to solicit feedback in real time. Normalize the communication channels on an ongoing basis to develop a trusted source of information and support.

In times of crisis, providing effective communication is mission critical to anchoring your employees to your organization, managing through the crisis and coming out stronger together on the other side. In the meantime, do the best you can. It will make a difference and go a long way during these so-called “unprecedented times.”

Brink News

PRODUCT & SERVICE COUNCILS

***Young Entrepreneurs Group
of Asia-Pacific***

**Asian entrepreneurship
has room to grow**



Asia is at a defining moment. After years of economic turbulence, the future appears bright. Many forecast that Asia will be the world's most economically dynamic region in 2023 as countries capitalize on their competitive edge.

As the world becomes more interconnected, entrepreneurship in Asia has emerged as a driver

for national growth.

According to the Shopify Entrepreneurship Index, which measures the contributions of entrepreneurs to job creation, exports and gross domestic product in 40 countries, Australia, Japan, China and Hong Kong rank among the top 10 in terms of business activity impact from entrepreneurs.

This year, with the International Monetary Fund predicting that Asia will contribute over 70% of global growth, analysts forecast that the region will surpass the U.S. and Europe in e-commerce sales. They see Asia's total topping \$2 trillion.

Yet the story is not universally positive. Underinvestment in export strategies and digital infrastructure, as well as negative cultural attitudes toward entrepreneurship, are holding back key countries.

The ability to connect across borders, to buy, sell, collaborate and share, is the magic that has made Asia an incredible growth engine.

To take entrepreneurship onward, Asia will need to further revive its exports. Economic powerhouses like India and Indonesia, along with export-focused economies like China, Vietnam and South Korea, have seen a decline in cross-border commerce. These nations have large, young and digitally savvy populations but have yet to fully capitalize on their entrepreneurial potential.

Initiatives like "Make In India" are showing signs of promise, with New Delhi recently marking the milestone of \$400 billion in exports. While a large portion of this is production for foreign companies, Indian entrepreneurs are finding ways to take their own brands overseas.

By expanding its online presence, Bala Sarada has built teamaker Vahdam India into one of the country's largest global wellness brands. It now ships to 4 million customers in over 130 countries. Promoting this kind of entrepreneurship is crucial to reinforce Asia's position on the global stage.

Second, Asia needs to invest in digital infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, to drive digital-based economic transformation. Almost 40% of the region's population lacks connectivity. Being remote should not mean being unreachable. Half the entrepreneurs studied in India and Vietnam, and more than 80% of Indonesian e-commerce entrepreneurs, operate outside major cities, according to Shopify's research.

Progress is being made, with Indonesia

championing various public-private partnership financing models to enhance its global economic position. Digital connectivity facilitates education, health care access and e-commerce, all of which can play a significant role in the advancement of dispersed populations.

To promote this development, we must work together in a spirit of shared endeavor to change perceptions of entrepreneurship in Asia.

Researchers often cite culture as the most impactful factor in promoting entrepreneurship given its influence on core values around innovation and risk-taking. There has been some progress through government investment in entrepreneurial training initiatives for young people and female entrepreneurs.

However, this task cannot be left completely to governments or companies, and should be made to happen organically. As communities are exposed to diverse influences and perspectives, nations must encourage new generations to embrace the concept of entrepreneurship.

Indeed, a new landscape for entrepreneurship is taking shape. In East Asia and Australia, an expanding middle class and a young, tech-savvy population enjoy better access to capital, talent, education and innovation.

Japan is emerging as a power player due to its pro-business policies, focus on cross-border opportunities and support for entrepreneurs. Japanese entrepreneurship is demonstrating remarkable growth, with Shopify's index showing their impact on exports rising 29% during 2022, effects on business activity and jobs supported up 24% each and GDP impact up 23%.

Pro-business agendas are fueling economic growth beyond Japan. In its latest budget, the Australian government has proposed new tax incentives for small businesses, which will add to the impact from ongoing investment in startup grants and entrepreneurship programs to strengthen the nation's economy.

Entrepreneurs face challenges navigating complex regulations and paperwork, and governments can alleviate this burden by simplifying and streamlining the process of starting and running a business.

Singapore is recognized as one of the best places to launch a business. Its entrepreneur-friendly approach, exemplified by its online business reg-

istration system, allows entrepreneurs to set up a company in a few hours.

Jenny Kwang began crafting and selling jewelry as a hobby in Singapore in 2014 and now her J&CO Jewellery ships 10,000 orders worldwide each month. Singaporean entrepreneurs now lead Southeast Asia in terms of impact, contributing double-digit growth to GDP, jobs and exports.

A focus on education, connectivity and pro-business initiatives can nurture entrepreneurs. Collaboration and shared efforts among governments, businesses and communities are vital to achieving these goals. By reviving exports, investing in digital infrastructure and promoting a culture of entrepreneurship, Asia can strengthen its position on the global stage.

Harley Finkelstein for Nikkei Asia

Asian ICT Council

Alibaba: Four in five businesses in Asia are planning a complete cloud migration by 2024

The speed of cloud adoption in Asia is incredible—almost every business, organization, and leader is talking about it. A recent report by Alibaba Cloud, the biggest Chinese cloud service provider, stated that 84% of existing users of cloud services in Asia expect to increase their cloud technology investment this year.

“The Next-Generation Cloud Strategy in Asia” report is based on the outcome of a survey conducted by Alibaba between the end of September and early October 2022. The result of online questionnaires among 1,000 cloud strategy decision-makers in small to large-sized businesses indicated that more than four in five (84%) are planning a complete cloud migration in two years.

Individuals surveyed are cloud services users from eight markets in Asia, including Malaysia,



Hong Kong, Singapore, the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Japan, and South Korea. Respondents came from various industries, including financial services, gaming, internet & technology, manufacturing, media & telecommunications, public sector, and retail.

“As more companies move their critical businesses online to efficiently handle their workloads in the post-pandemic world, businesses in Asia that are already using cloud services plan to increase their investment across various cloud strategies over the coming year,” Alibaba Cloud said in a statement.

Alibaba Cloud predicts that the increase in investment will most likely come from Thailand (95%), Indonesia (94%), the Philippines (91%), Hong Kong (83%), and Singapore (83%). A majority of the surveyed businesses in Japan and South Korea indicated that they would maintain their current levels of investment.

Key industries like the gaming sector are expected to see the highest increase in cloud investment, followed by media & telecommunications, internet & technology, and financial services. In terms of investment priorities, a majority of businesses in Asia will focus on data analytics & AI (53%), cloud computing (52%), and automation (46%).

Global market research firm NielsenIQ commissioned the survey by Alibaba Cloud to understand better the state of adoption of the overall cloud strategies – private, public, and hybrid – across Asia.

Alibaba Cloud believes that respondents’ sentiment underscores the importance of cloud infrastructure in supporting business growth. “This has also been reflected in the survey that 94% of organizations in Malaysia have plans to evolve its cloud strategy in the future,” the statement reads.

Interestingly, over two-thirds (69%) of the

surveyed businesses have used the cloud for at least three years. “Those in Hong Kong, Japan, and Singapore are the earliest adopters, with only one in five (20%) having less than three years of cloud services experience. Industry-wise, internet and technology, manufacturing, and financial services show the highest level of cloud maturity,” Alibaba Cloud stated.

At the time of the survey, private cloud (40%) was the most popular strategy in Asia, followed by public cloud (27%). “Strong reputation for security, reliable local support, and attractive pricing are the main reasons businesses choose public cloud, in which 38% of the surveyed businesses expect to boost investment by more than one-fifth in the coming year,” the Chinese cloud computing arm shared.

South Korea has the highest public cloud adoption rate (43%) among the Asian markets surveyed. On the other hand, hybrid cloud adoption is on the rise, with the survey recording a seven percentage-point net increase in the current adoption rate compared to the respondents’ initial cloud strategy adoption.

Techwire Asia

Asian Council on Health and Education

Improving public health capacities at borders and fostering cross- border collaboration in central Asia and southern Caucasus

The central Asian and southern Caucasus regions are better prepared to assess and improve public health capacities at points of entry. This is following a 5-day training workshop conducted by WHO/Europe for those working at or with points of



entry, in line with the International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005).

Points of entry, including airports, seaports and ground crossings, are on the front line in helping to prevent, detect and respond to public health events arising via international travel and transport. During the COVID-19 pandemic, over two thirds of countries restricted international traffic by imposing travel-related health measures and closing points of entry.

WHO designed the “Assessment tool for core capacity requirements at designated airports, ports and ground crossings” to support countries in monitoring and evaluating their IHR capacities at their most important points of entry and exit.

Dr Aizhan Yesmagambetova, Vice-Minister of Health of Kazakhstan, said, “This training workshop is timely, especially now that international travel and trade have resumed. Countries should make strong efforts to build public health capacity, including at points of entry.”

Designated points of entry

Participants from countries across central Asia and the southern Caucasus reviewed the IHR, including requirements for capacities that must always be in place at designated points of entry, and specific measures to respond to a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC).

Participants also practised mechanisms for collaboration and communication among national and subnational health authorities. They gained practical experience on these topics through site visits at the Aktau International Airport and the Aktau Seaport.

Under the IHR, States Parties should designate major international points of entry based on the level of risk and the volume of traffic, among

other criteria. These designations help to prioritize investments in developing and maintaining core public health capacities. In 2018, 583 points of entry were designated across the WHO European Region; so far in 2023, 670 have been designated.

Managing public health events

The workshop assisted the 40 participants in strengthening institutional capacities for preparedness, readiness and response in order to manage public health events – including the spread of infectious diseases – related to population, animal and cargo movements across international borders. It focused on:

- standardizing participants' understanding of how to use the assessment tool;
- facilitating independent assessments on a risk-based approach;
- supporting implementation of evidence-informed, risk-based public health decisions and policies to minimize public health risks related to population movements across borders; and
- fostering intersectoral and cross-border collaboration.

Dr. Skender Sylva, WHO Representative in Kazakhstan, stated, "In inviting 6 countries together to train their public health experts working on points of entry, we further exchange experience and create a harmonized body of practice among professionals who will undoubtedly champion the WHO standards in assessing and strengthening points of entry according to the IHR requirements."

The training was organized by WHO/Europe, WHO headquarters and the WHO Country Office in Kazakhstan, in collaboration with the Kazakh ministries of health, finance and the interior, and the Kazakh transport authorities of the Aktau Seaport and the Aktau International Airport. The workshop was conducted in the city of Aktau, where the Seaport and Airport opened their doors for site visits.

The workshop was supported by the European Union's Healthy Gateways joint action initiative, the International Civil Aviation Organization, and the International Organization for Migration.

World Health Organization

Women Entrepreneurs Council

OSCE promotes Women's Entrepreneurship in Central Asia at a Regional Forum in Termez



Traditional handicraft is inseparable from Central Asia, evoking images of the Silk Road. Yet, the future of trade is digital.

This was the focus of the Regional Forum "E-commerce in handicraft as a driver of key changes in women's entrepreneurship in Central Asia", held on 5-6 May 2023 in Termez, Uzbekistan. The event provided a platform to discuss the role information technology (IT) and digital solutions play in the development of the handicraft sector, in particular for businesswomen. The Forum, organized by the International

Business Women Association of Uzbekistan (IBWA) in co-operation with the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan (PCUz), brought together around 130 women entrepreneurs from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, as well as Afghan women established in Uzbekistan.

Discussions stressed how handicraft has recently grown into a thriving industry that strengthens local cultural economies, with IT and digital solutions boosting the potential for regional cooperation.

As an example, the e-commerce market in Uzbekistan is developing rapidly, thanks to the active participation of businesswomen and the sup-

port of state policies, programmes and strategies in this area. In particular, bordering three countries the Surkhandarya province – whose capital is Termez – offers great opportunities for regional trade, connectivity and business co-operation.

"Helping women acquire the digital knowledge and skills needed to develop entrepreneurship is an integral part of OSCE programmes aimed at women's economic empowerment," said Sergei Sizov, Acting OSCE Project Co-ordinator.

For many years, the OSCE PCUz has been supporting initiatives to strengthen business ca-

pacities of women, to improve their employment opportunities, and to promote their economic participation through digital technologies. Concrete examples include the support to the start-up Coozin – a digital platform helping women to run an online cooking business, training courses on computer literacy and digital marketing for women in cooperation with IT Park, and long-term fruitful cooperation with the IBWA to develop communities of businesswomen in different regions of Uzbekistan.

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

INVESTMENT & JOINT VENTURES

Collaborative partnership to enhance cellular agriculture in Japan and Asia-Pacific region

A partnership between the Asia-Pacific Society for Cellular Agriculture (APAC-SCA) and the Japan Association for Cellular Agriculture (JACA) has been established with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

This collaborative agreement is designed to enhance the development and expansion of cellular agriculture in Japan and the wider Asia-Pacific region.

"Establishing long-lasting ties with key stakeholders and other associations regionally and globally is a key asset in the strategic development of the industry for APAC-SCA," said Peter Yu, programme director, APAC Society for Cellular Agriculture. "Through this MoU we reverberate the message and necessity of a key tenet of the industry



– global collaboration."

As part of the agreement, JACA will gain improved access to the global network of the cell-cultured industry. Simultaneously, APAC-SCA will assume a more prominent role in facilitating regulatory advancements in Japan. The two organisations will collaborate on various initiatives, including knowledge sharing and the development of a risk communication strategy for their members.

The ACA, which operates as a collaborative effort between industry, academia, and the government, has been actively involved in establishing regulations for the production and distribution of cell-based food products like cultivated meat, eggs, and dairy across Japan. In a recent event, it brought together approximately 150 stakeholders, including members of the Japanese Parliament, government officials from Japan and other countries, industry associations, member companies, academia, and media representatives. The objective of the gather-

ing was to reach a consensus on essential measures for ensuring food safety in the cultivated food sector, as well as methods to protect the rights of Japanese farmers regarding branded-animal cells such as Wagyu.

The MoU follows an announcement in February by Japan's Prime Minister, Fumio Kishida, signalling the country's commitment to developing a cell-based agriculture industry primarily focused on cultivated meat and fish. This strategic move aims to reduce Japan's carbon footprint.

As per GFI APAC, an industry think tank, the current interpretation of existing laws allows for the potential sale of cultivated meat in Japan. This regulatory opening presents an opportunity for Japan to emerge as a global leader in cultivated meat and attract the interest of international start-ups in this sector. The recently established MoU, along with the government's plan, will provide a framework for advancing the industry.

Deregulation in the cellular agriculture industry is progressing, with Singapore's Food Agency being the sole entity to have approved cultivated meat for sale so far. However, last week brought positive news as two California-based cultivated meat producers, Eat Just and Upside Foods, received label approval from the USDA. This milestone represents the final step before obtaining full production and distribution approval throughout the US.

Far Eastern Agriculture

As a result, Fidante's distribution support for Proterra Asia will extend to jurisdictions outside Europe, including Australia and Japan.

The strategy seeks to capitalise on growing consumer demand from expanding urban populations for safe, high-quality, healthy and sustainable food products.

Victor Rodriguez, chief executive of funds management at Challenger, said: "Diversifying Fidante's capability and offering in the alternatives space is a strong area of focus for us.

"Proterra Asia's commitment to supporting and investing in sustainable food and agriculture businesses in Asia is a highly sought-after proposition to global investors seeking innovative, high-growth opportunities.

"We are excited to support Proterra Asia to bring their exceptional offering to investors in strategic markets, while enabling them to maintain their diligent focus on investing in the dynamic food and agriculture landscape in Asia."

Tai Lin, managing partner of Proterra Asia, added: "We have enjoyed a highly productive collaboration with Fidante over the past few years, including most recently in the successful final close of Proterra Asia Food Fund 3 in October 2022. We are pleased to be deepening our relationship with Fidante through this minority investment, leveraging their network and market expertise globally."

IPE Real Assets

Fidante enters strategic partnership with Proterra Asia to focus on agribusiness sectors

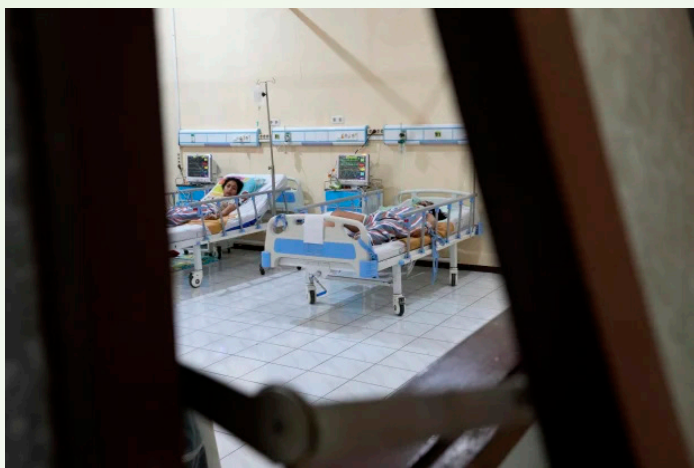
Fidante, Challenger's multi-affiliate fund manager, has entered into a strategic partnership with Proterra Investment Partners Asia, a private equity firm focused on the Asian food and agribusiness sectors.

Fidante has taken a minority stake in Proterra Asia and builds on an existing distribution agreement whereby Fidante has been marketing Proterra Asia food strategy to investors in Europe.

Australian joint venture leads foreign push into Indonesia's hospitals

The Indonesian government has urged an Australian-led joint venture that's pioneering foreign investment in Indonesia's health sector to accelerate the construction of multiple hospitals and clinics specified in a \$1.3 billion agreement.

Sanusa Medika Hospitals, a joint venture majority-owned by Australian companies Aspen Medical and Docta, this week began construction of a 200-bed hospital in Depok, West Java. It's the first of a planned 23 hospitals and 650 community clin-



ics and the government has big expectations.

“Several private companies have been investing in hospitals, but this will be the first international hospital to operate and it will bring medical practitioners from abroad,” Indonesia’s Co-ordinating Minister for the Economy, Airlangga Hartarto, told *The Australian Financial Review* at the ground-breaking ceremony.

In his speech, Mr Airlangga asked Aspen Medical, the Canberra-based multinational steering the build, to accelerate the construction of the other facilities planned for West Java by Sanusa in the next two decades.

The Depok hospital is expected to cost between \$US40 million and \$US50 million (between \$58.4 million and \$73 million) to build. Indonesian state-owned enterprise Jasa Sarana has a 10 per cent stake in Sanusa, which signed a \$US1 billion agreement with the West Javanese government in 2020.

The value of the deal is such that it sparked a lawsuit between the two co-founders of Aspen Medical, Glenn Keys and Andrew Walker, after the latter sold his shares in the company before the agreement was finalised. A dispute over the value of his stake was settled last week.

The push by Aspen Medical and Sydney-based Docta into Indonesia is a direct result of provisions in the 2019 Free Trade Agreement between Jakarta and Canberra allowing Australians to own up to 67 per cent of large hospitals and pathology, paramedic, medical and dental services.

The government of President Joko Widodo has since cleared the way for 100 per cent foreign ownership, though enabling regulations are still being finalized.

Medical tourism is one drawcard for foreign

investors. America’s famous Mayo Clinic is among those hoping to lure domestic and international visitors to Bali with a new hospital.

Sanusa Medika has a different focus. The company plans to build in second-tier cities where property prices and bed availability rates are low and potential for profitability and growth is high.

Mr. Keys, Aspen Medical co-founder and executive chairman, said the Depok hospital would be financed by a mix of debt and equity, in the same way the Canberra-based multinational has funded hospital construction in Dubai and elsewhere. “There is no shortage of interest,” he said.

“If you look at Indonesia’s predicted growth, at how the government is raising levels of governance, opening up to foreign investment, and seeking international co-operation, it is a fantastic time to be in this region,” Mr. Keys said.

When it opens in 2025, the hospital will offer services to Indonesians covered by public and private insurance, and those paying their own way. It’s a new model for Indonesia, where public hospitals are scarce and those who can afford it frequently travel to Singapore or Malaysia for medical care.

The Indonesian government estimates these trips cost \$US6 billion a year – money that could be spent at home if facilities were better.

Indonesia’s ratio of 1.4 hospital beds per 1000 people is the lowest among the ASEAN countries. The country also has the world’s largest public health insurance scheme, covering most of its 270 million people. Long-term funding of the scheme remains an issue, partly because six in 10 Indonesians are engaged in informal work so don’t make any contributions.

This will remain a budget headache for years to come. It has also focused policy-makers on investing in health solutions that can help reduce treatment costs by focusing on preventive health measures and digital services.

Pent-up demand from those who stayed away from hospitals and doctors during the COVID-19 pandemic is putting pressure on the health budget, said Bhima Yudhistira, executive director of the Centre of Economic and Law Studies/CELIOS in Jakarta.

“In Indonesia, the most common diseases are heart disease, diabetes, kidney disease, and other non-infectious conditions, but there is no prevention education. The public schemes are focused

only on treatment,” Dr. Bhima said.

Sanusa Medika is in talks with both provincial and central governments, said Docta’s Dr. Andrew Rochford. The joint venture has a mobile clinic that was on the scene the day after the earthquake in West Java’s Cianjur city last November.

Foreign investors are increasingly welcome in Indonesia, but they have to learn how to navigate the market, Dr. Rochford said.

“We’ve spent two-and-half years building this relationship. You have to be on the ground,” he said.

Australian Financial Review



Jardine Matheson’s Investment Arm to Partner with Southeast Asian Car Marketplace Carro

Jardine Cycle & Carriage (JC&C), the investment arm of Hong Kong-based conglomerate Jardine Matheson, has teamed up with Singapore’s online automotive marketplace Carro in a deal worth more than \$60 million to step up used car sales amid new vehicle shortages.

The partnership will see JC&C pick up an undisclosed interest in Carro. Carro will in turn receive a stake of equivalent value in Republic Auto, a Singapore-headquartered second-hand car dealer controlled by JC&C. The companies said in a statement that the collaboration will grant Carro access to an expanded supply of high-quality used cars, while allowing Carro to enhance Republic Auto’s digital offerings.

Meanwhile, the companies will form a joint venture to launch an automotive aftermarket business, which will initially focus on Singapore and neighboring Malaysia.

“JC&C chose to partner with Carro because we look beyond used car wholesaling and retailing, setting our sights on the larger ecosystem that facilitates deeper cooperation in financing, insurance and aftersales,” Wilfrid Foo, managing director of regional direct motor interests at JC&C, said in the statement. “The partnership will enable us to scale up our operations and capabilities faster by leveraging our combined areas of expertise.”

JC&C’s partnership with Carro comes as a prolonged global chip shortage has kept vehicle production low and worries about a potential economic recession drove up used car demand. Carro said it had nearly doubled its revenue to more than



Mubadala forms \$600 million Japanese residential property venture

Abu Dhabi state investor Mubadala has formed a joint venture with Proprium Capital Partners and Manulife Investment Management to build an up to 80 billion yen (\$572 million) property portfolio, Mubadala and Proprium said.

Samurai Capital, a leading asset manager with significant experience in managing property assets, will partner the venture.

“The joint venture was seeded with existing rental multi-family properties in Japan and will seek to acquire additional assets,” Proprium Capital said in its statement.

Targeting urban dwellers in Tokyo and Osaka, the seed assets are high-quality properties with convenient access to railway stations and nearby neighborhood amenities, Proprium added.

Reuters

\$800 million in the financial year ended March, and had a positive Ebitda of \$4 million during the same period. Founded in 2015, Carro raised \$360 million in a round led by SoftBank's Vision Fund 2 in 2021, which at the time valued the company at more than \$1 billion.

"JC&C operates not only in Singapore but also in other geographies such as Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia and Hong Kong. We have found their footprint to be extremely synergistic," said Aaron Tan, cofounder and CEO of Carro, in a written response. "Furthermore, JC&C deals upstream and has a good quality supply of used vehicles which Carro can now tap into. This partnership provides us with access to good quality inventory that we otherwise would not have."

Singapore-listed JC&C is the investment holding company of Jardine Matheson, the 190-year-old empire helmed by the Keswick family that has business operations spanning real estate, hospitality, heavy engineering, financial services and others.

Southeast Asia-focused JC&C controls Astra International, an automotive group based in Indonesia and one of the two flagship businesses of the Jardines conglomerate. The investment company also has interests in Vietnam's leading car maker Truong Hai Group Corporation, the country's biggest dairy producer Vinamilk and Thailand's leading cement maker Siam City Cement, among others.

Forbes



ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Singapore and South Africa sign agreements to collaborate on ICT, skills development

Singapore and South Africa on May 16 signed Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) to collaborate on areas like information and communications technology (ICT), and skills development.

The MOU on ICT will pursue cooperation in that space, including the exchange of best practices and furthering collaboration in existing and new or emerging aspects, said the Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The MOU on skills development will enhance Singapore's cooperation with South Africa in skills development, including areas like governance and education, the ministry added.



Both Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa were present as the MOUs were signed in Cape Town.

The agreements underscore Singapore's strong economic ties with South Africa, Mr. Lee said at a briefing in Tuynhuys, South Africa's presidential office.

"Our bilateral trade has grown by over 60 per cent since 2018. We have accumulated around 13.5 billion South African rand of investments in South Africa, which is nearly a billion Singapore dollars," he added.

Mr. Lee noted there are many Singapore businesses that have a presence in South Africa, across a wide range of industries from agribusiness and urban solutions to hospitality and manufacturing.

With South Africa being Singapore's most

“broad-based” partner in Sub-Saharan Africa, there is scope for further economic growth and cooperation.

A business delegation comprising 17 Singapore firms accompanied Mr. Lee and government officials to South Africa, and a roundtable meeting was later held with Mr. Ramaphosa and other South African companies to discuss opportunities in the country.

Aside from business links, the “very important” people-to-people ties can be expanded even further, Mr. Lee said.

Singapore Airlines flies direct to Johannesburg and Cape Town, while more than 1,000 South African officials have participated in capacity-building programmes under the Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP).

The Singapore-Africa Partnership, which includes priority placement, customised courses, and postgraduate scholarships in Singapore, was also launched last year.

However, Mr. Lee said much more could be done to strengthen connectivity between South Africa and Singapore, adding there could be more flight services, increased trade and investment, and stronger digital links.

Mr. Lee recalled how the late Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew first visited South Africa in 1992, with diplomatic relations established a year later.

In 1997, former South African president Nelson Mandela visited Singapore and to commemorate that trip, a giant Cola tree was dedicated to him.

Mr. Lee said that tree still stands “tall and strong” to this day and expressed his desire that South Africa-Singapore ties would continue to blossom the same way.

He also invited Mr. Ramaphosa to visit Singapore again after his 2016 trip as the then-deputy president.

Channel News Asia

Tehran, Tashkent Look to Boost Central Asian Cooperation



Wedged by Russia, China, Iran and Afghanistan, the Central Asian republics are pursuing multi-vector foreign policies to ensure economic growth and navigate among the local powers, as well as the US and Europe, even though the latter have antagonistic relations with the four countries.

The republics know, “When the elephants fight, the grass suffers,” reads an article published in OilPrice.com.

Uzbekistan is an example of the political entrepreneurship demanded of the republics, as they press ahead in an environment shaped by the twin shocks of the Taliban victory in Afghanistan and the NATO-Russia war in Ukraine.

In June 2023, Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev met Iran’s President Ebrahim Raisi and Iran’s Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The meeting netted cooperation pacts in areas as diverse as agriculture, energy, customs affairs, sports, science, technology and innovation, cultural exchanges, healthcare, Chabahar Port, the environment, industry and tourism. It was the first visit to Iran by an Uzbek leader in over 20 years.

The countries plan to increase annual trade to \$3 billion, according to Raisi (trade was \$431 million in 2021), and intend to develop a transport corridor through Turkmenistan, which Mirziyoyev first discussed with Turkmenistan’s President Serdar Berdimuhamedow in October 2022. (Transportation cooperation between Tashkent and Ashgabat started in 2017 with the opening of the Turkmenabat-Farab railroad and car bridges that will link the countries and open opportunities for long-distance trade.) Raisi pledged to connect Uzbekistan to high seas via Turkmenistan and Afghanistan.

The June meetings were a follow-up to the

March 2023 visit by Uzbekistan's foreign minister who met Iran's ministers of foreign affairs and industries. Afterwards, the parties announced efforts to increase trade turnover, and foster business links and people-to-people ties. The ministerial meetings built on the September 2022 visit by Raisi to Uzbekistan that produced 17 agreements in areas such as energy, transport and agriculture, and discussed how to double trade from the current \$500 million annually, though in less than a year the trade target has ambitiously increased to \$3 billion.

Iran is increasingly attractive to the landlocked Central Asian republics that are seeking new trade routes. In June 2021, Tashkent hosted a conference to highlight Central Asia-South Asia connectivity via Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Two months later, the US and NATO retreated from Afghanistan and the country plunged in chaos, so the republics had to consider alternatives. In February 2022, the Russia-Ukraine war forced Kazakhstan to develop a trans-Caspian route to avoid the effects of the Russian-Ukraine war, and the other republics followed suit.

Central Asia can now consider trading through Iran's ports of Chabahar and Bandar Abbas.

Iran can offer a space free of the violence by the Islamic State and the Pakistani Taliban that plagues Afghanistan and Pakistan; organized and functioning government agencies; and ports adjacent to the markets of India (Chabahar) and the Persian Gulf (Bandar Abbas). Iran is also a large market of close to 90 million people.

The US has promoted the Middle Corridor to the republics as an alternative to Iran, but avoiding the "Southern Corridor" via Iran or Afghanistan-Pakistan, deprives the republics of ready access to Asia and the Persian Gulf. The republics are not burdened by Washington's sense of grievance against Iran that has festered since 1979, especially as there would be an economic cost of joining Washington's campaign against the Islamic Republic, with no offsetting benefits other than a thank you for "doing the right thing."

The republics want a reliable partner who can also help them deal with instability in Afghanistan. Iran shares that interest and has no territorial aspirations in Central Asia, though it will seek political support from the republics in fora such as the United Nations, as it implements its "Look East"

policy and seeks a larger regional role through groups like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

The people of Tajikistan are Persian-speaking and many historic cities in the region, such as Samarkand and Bukhara in Uzbekistan, and Eastern Uzbekistan, are home to Tajik people who are indigenous to the region, so Iran will use cultural links, old and new, as tools of influence.

Financial Tribune

Japan's foreign minister seeks UK's cooperation in Indo-Pacific



Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi has stressed the importance of strengthening cooperation between Japan and the U.K., saying it is in the U.K.'s own interest to realize a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Hayashi made the statement during a speech before members of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, or Chatham House, in London. He is visiting the country to attend the Ukraine Recovery Conference.

In his speech, Hayashi positioned the U.K. as an indispensable partner in paving the way toward a new era together. He stressed that Japan and the U.K. must demonstrate through words and actions that unilateral attempts to change the status quo will not be tolerated anywhere in the world.

Regarding China, which continues its aggressive maritime expansion, and Russia, which

has invaded Ukraine, Hayashi also said that raising Japan and the U.K.'s voices together with those of the emerging and developing countries known as the Global South, based on the principle of the rule of law, will serve as a deterrent.

Earlier in the day, Hayashi met with Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal. Hayashi invited him to the Japan-Ukraine economic recovery promotion conference to be held in Japan late this year or early next year, and Shmyhal expressed his intention to attend.

Shmyhal also expressed his gratitude for Japan's support and said that he would like to cooperate for the success of the conference in Japan.

Asia News Network

Pakistan and Iran to boost trade, cooperation in energy



Pakistan and Iran have agreed to enhance trade and bilateral cooperation in various sectors, including energy, maritime, and transport, the Pakistani Foreign Office said.

The development was reported after Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Dr. Asad Majeed Khan concluded a two-day (June 17-18) visit to Tehran where he led the 12th bilateral political consultations. Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that the foreign secretary held "fruitful and wide-ranging



discussions" with Deputy Foreign Minister of Iran, Ali Bagheri Kani. The two neighbouring countries agreed to enhance and diversify bilateral trade and expand cooperation in energy, transport connectivity, education, and people-to-people exchanges. Pakistan's Ambassador Rahim Hayat Qureshi and other senior officials from both countries also attended the meeting.

Recognising the significance of institutional mechanisms, including the Joint Economic Commission (JEC) and Joint Trade Committee (JTC), both sides emphasised the need for regular convening of these forums to foster closer cooperation in areas of mutual interest.

During the Tehran visit, Asad Majeed Khan also met Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and they agreed to maintain the current momentum of high-level exchanges and strengthen mutually-beneficial cooperation in diverse fields. The Pakistani foreign secretary welcomed the normalization of diplomatic relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Pakistan Maritime Security Agency inks MoU with Iranian border guards

In a separate development, Secretary Defence Lt Gen (R) Hamood uz Zaman Khan, accompanied by a defence delegation, visited Iran, where both sides agreed to enhance bilateral cooperation in various sectors. During the visit, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on maritime cooperation was signed between the Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA) and Iranian border guards. This agreement aims to strengthen relations and foster collaboration between the PMSA and Iranian border guards in areas such as security, joint counter-terrorism measures, and regional economic con-

nectivity.

Iranian Navy Commander meets Pakistan Air Chief

In Islamabad, Iranian Navy Commander Rear Admiral Shahram Irani visited the office of Pakistan Air Force (PAF) Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu on June 19. The meeting focused on areas of mutual interest and regional developments, aiming to enhance the ties between the two navies.

During the meeting, the PAF chief highlighted the impact of advancements in space technology, electronic warfare, cyber capabilities, and artificial intelligence (AI) on national security. He briefed Rear Admiral Shahram Irani about the ongoing projects undertaken by the PAF, with a special emphasis on the modernization and development of indigenous capabilities. The Iran Navy commander expressed his commitment to further improving military-to-military relations, particularly in the areas of operations, training, and the aviation industry.

Gulf News

China, New Zealand willing to advance trade growth, agreements



China is willing to advance balanced trade growth with New Zealand and effectively implement the upgraded protocol of their free trade agreement, said the country's top commerce offi-

cial.

During his meeting with Damien O'Connor, New Zealand's Minister for Trade and Export Growth in Beijing, Chinese Commerce Minister Wang Wentao said China is keen to further strengthen exchanges and cooperation with New Zealand under frameworks such as the World Trade Organization, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, and the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement.

O'Connor said that New Zealand has maintained a long-standing and positive economic and trade cooperation with China

The two sides engaged in frank discussions, focusing on promoting bilateral economic and trade relations, as well as strengthening cooperation in regional and multilateral areas, said a statement released by China's Ministry of Commerce after the meeting.

O'Connor said that New Zealand has maintained a long-standing and positive economic and trade cooperation with China. The trade structures of the two countries are highly complementary, and the bilateral free trade agreement has facilitated rapid growth in both export and import activities.

New Zealand will continue leveraging complementary advantages and strengthen cooperation with China, particularly in agriculture and food security sectors, said O'Connor, adding that the Oceania country seeks to enhance communication and coordination with China in multilateral and regional mechanisms.

Asia News Network

TECHNOLOGY

New computer memory tech could power the AI of the future

A research team, led by the University of Cambridge, has developed a novel computer memory design, which promises to significantly improve performance while reducing the energy demands of internet and communications technologies.

As per the university, AI, algorithms, internet usage, and other data-driven technologies are estimated to require over 30% of our global electricity consumption within the next decade.

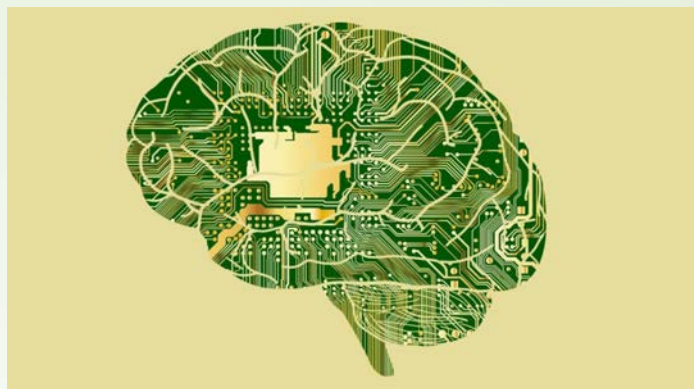
“To a large extent, this explosion in energy demands is due to shortcomings of current computer memory technologies,” said first author Dr Markus Hellenbrand, from Cambridge’s Department of Materials Science and Metallurgy. “In conventional computing, there’s memory on one side and processing on the other, and data is shuffled back between the two, which takes both energy and time.”

The researchers experimented with a new type of technology known as resistive switching memory. Unlike conventional memory devices that can encode data in two states (one or zero), this novel type of memory can enable a continuous range of states.

This is done by applying an electrical current on specific materials, causing the electrical resistance to increase or decrease. The various changes in electrical resistance create different possible states to store data.

“A typical USB stick based on continuous range would be able to hold between ten and 100 times more information, for example,” explained Hellenbrand.

The team developed a prototype device based on hafnium oxide, which had so far proven



to be challenging for resistive switching memory applications. That’s because the material has no structure at the atomic level. Hellenbrand and his co-scientists, however, found a solution: throwing barium into the mix.

When barium was added, it formed highly-structured barium “bridges” between thick films of hafnium oxide. At the point where these bridges meet the device contacts, an energy barrier was created, allowing the electrons to cross. The energy barrier can be raised or lowered, which changes the resistance of the hafnium oxide composite, and in turn allows multiple states to exist in the material.

“What’s really exciting about these materials is they can work like a synapse in the brain: they can store and process information in the same place, like our brains can,” Hellebrand said.

The researchers believe that this could lead to the development of computer memory devices with far greater density and performance but lower energy consumption, making the technology especially promising in the field of AI and machine learning.

A patent of the technology has been filed by Cambridge Enterprise, the university’s commercialisation arm, and the scientists are now working with the industry to run larger feasibility studies. They claim that integrating hafnium oxide into existing manufacturing processes won’t prove challenging, as the material is already being used in semiconductor production.

The Next Web

POLICY UPDATES

Australia

Australia considers fining social media companies for fake news



Australian officials are set to introduce legislation that would implement fines for social media companies that fail to remove disinformation and misinformation from their platforms.

The Sydney Morning Herald reported that the parliament's Communications Minister Michelle Rowland plans to release the draft legislation, giving the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) new powers to hold digital platforms accountable for spreading fake news.

According to the proposed legislation, the AMCA would be able to impose a new "code" on specific companies that repeatedly fail to combat the spread of false information and fake news on their platforms.

The maximum penalty for systemic breaches of a registered code would be \$2.75 million and the maximum penalty for breaching an industry standard would be \$6.88

million, according to the Herald.

The proposed legislation would also let AMCA be allowed to obtain information and documents from digital platforms relating to misinformation and disinformation on their services, though the government says the authority may not have a role in determining what's true or false.

"Mis- and disinformation sows division within the community, undermines trust and can threaten public health and safety," Rowland said in a statement, the Herald reported.

"The Albanese government is committed to keeping Australians safe online, and that includes ensuring the ACMA has the powers it needs to hold digital platforms to account for mis- and disinformation on their services."

Rowland also said that the legislation is aimed to "strike the right balance between protection from harmful mis- and disinformation online and freedom of speech".

"I encourage all stakeholders to make a submission and look forward to introducing the bill into parliament later this year, following the consultation process," she said.

The proposed laws come as the European Union (EU) also enacted similar laws toward social media companies last year, the Herald reported.

The Hill

Cambodia

Cambodia approves law barring non-voters from running for office



Cambodia's National Assembly unanimously approved an amendment to the election law that prohibits those who don't vote in next month's elections from running for office in future elections.

The change appears to be aimed at preventing a large-scale boycott of the July 23 vote by supporters of the main opposition Candlelight Party.

A boycott would be a way of expressing public anger over the National Election Committee's decision in May to ban the party from running in the election – essentially blocking the only major party that could challenge Prime Minister Hun Sen's ruling Cambodian People's Party.

The committee blamed the ban on inadequate paperwork, but opposition activists said it was politically motivated. They pointed out that they were allowed to compete in last year's local commune elections with the same documentation.

The ban, which was upheld by the Constitutional Council on May 25, means that the ruling Cambodian People's Party won't have any major challengers on the ballot next month. More than a dozen minor parties have also qualified for the ballot.

The result of the vote in the Assembly, which is made up only of

members from the CPP, was not a surprise. All 111 parliamentarians who participated in the session voted to approve the amendment without objections.

Anyone who doesn't vote next month won't be able to run as a candidate in next year's Senate, district and commune elections, according to Minister of Interior Sar Kheng. They also won't be able to run in the next general election scheduled for 2027, he said.

The amendment also allows for the prosecution of individuals and parties who discourage people from voting, he said in a speech at the Assembly before the final vote.

"The amendment will regulate those who want to run for offices. It won't affect voters' rights guaranteed by the Constitution," he said.

Radio Free Asia

Japan

New law to promote LGBTQ understanding takes effect in Japan



Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno speaks during a news conference at the Prime Minister's Office. (KYODO)

Japan's new law aimed at promoting understanding of LGBTQ people and other sexual minorities went into force on June 23.

The law warns against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

The government established a section in charge of the matter at the Cabinet Office as the law obliges it to draw up a basic plan to expand public understanding of sexual diversity and report progress once a year.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno told a news conference that people have yet to fully understand the importance of sexual diversity.

"The government will work hard to promote a society in which all people respect each other's human rights and dignity and enjoy a lively life," he said.

The law also calls for efforts to ensure all people live with peace of mind in response to concerns that men may use women's toilets by claiming to be women.

The new law is based on a bill prepared by a suprapartisan group of lawmakers in 2021. Parliament passed the bill after modifying some provisions to reflect concerns among conservative lawmakers cautious about such legislation.

However, conservative politicians are still critical of the law, while some sexual minorities are complaining that it would promote discrimination.

The new law "is nothing but an ideological law," Matsuno said, adding that such acts as men claiming to be women use women's toilets will be appropriately handled under other laws.

The Japan Times

New Zealand

Bill tackling supermarket duopoly to become law

Legislation tackling a power imbalance in the grocery industry is among a bunch of bills that have wound their way through the committee stage in Parliament this week.

The Grocery Industry Competition Bill, which passed its third and final reading this evening, seeks to improve competition and efficiency in the grocery industry, by taking measures such as establishing a Grocery Commissioner at the Commerce Commission, to referee the sector.

A market study by the Commerce Commission indicated that consumers are routinely getting an unfair deal at the supermarket checkouts due to systemic competition problems in that grocery sector which is dominated by a duopoly of Foodstuffs and Woolworths. These two companies pull in over \$1 million a day in excess profits from consumers, at a time when food prices are rising faster than inflation.

The government says the bill will enable a more level playing field for smaller retailers and new market entrants in the sector, allowing them to source and sell a wider range of groceries at better prices. The Grocery Commissioner will have a range of monitoring and enforcement tools and the ability to impose additional regulation on price and range, and require the major retailers to provide wholesale supply on certain terms.

The Economic Development, Science and Innovation Committee received a lot of submission on this Bill. The Labour MP Jamie Strange offered a useful example of how the duopoly affects those at the community level.

"I'll just mention one submitter that sort of stuck in my mind.

It was a gentleman who owned a small dairy. And when he had to buy food for his dairy, he had to go to the wholesaler—the wholesaler was owned by one of the duopoly—and basically, they dictated the prices to him in terms of what he had to pay for the products,” he explained.

“So many of us have been to a corner dairy and thought, ‘Why are these prices so high?’ Well, one of the reasons is because they actually can’t get the equivalent prices that the supermarkets get. Now, this dairy owner, if he goes directly to the producer, then the producer will go, ‘Well, what do I do? Do I give you the product or do I stay in with the duopoly? Do I risk being ostracised by the duopoly?’ So I mean there are serious power imbalances all over the place here.”

Radio New Zealand

Philippines

New law sought to fix nurse shortage in the Philippines



Instead of tapping unlicensed nurses to fill the vacancies in the health-care sector, as proposed by Health Secretary Teodoro Herbosa, the government should instead prioritise the passage of a comprehensive nursing bill that would narrow the pay gap between private and public nurses.

“This [proposal of Herbosa]

... should not be a priority and needs careful study first,” Philippine Nurses Association (PNA) president Melvin Miranda told the Inquirer.

PNA is the accredited professional body of nurses, with a current membership of around 52,000.

Miranda, who is also dean of Manila Central University’s College of Nursing, said there were “two significant considerations” the government should focus on.

“One is the specific provision aligning the salary of our [public] nurses with salary grade 15 [with their counterparts] in the private sector,” he said.

Another is improving nurses’ working conditions which has been a perennial problem in both private and public medical facilities. Under Department of Health (DOH) guidelines, the ideal nurse-to-patient ratio is 1:12 although global standards set it at 1:4.

To find a “concrete solution,” Miranda also pushed for a joint dialogue with concerned agencies such as the Department of Budget and Management, the Department of Labour and Employment, as well as the Department of the Interior and Local Government, whose involvement would be crucial in addressing the impact of devolution on the implementation of the Salary Standardization Law in some health facilities.

Under Herbosa’s plan, nursing graduates who failed the board exams would be given a “temporary license” but in a limited capacity, to be able to work at a government hospital under the supervision of board certified nurses.

He said that unlicensed nurses may get the same pay rate as licensed nurses in an entry-level post, which is Salary Grade 15, or equivalent to P36,619 per month.

But Miranda said this was “definitely not fair,” pointing out that professional nurses would suffer under this setup due to their “wider scope of practice” while they would

also be “accountable” for the actions of unlicensed nurses.

“Why not prioritise the plantilla positions for our new passers?” he said, noting that over 10,000 passed the nursing board exams in May.

“They could be a source for the human resources for health,” he added, referring to the DOH deployment and training programme.

Based on DOH data, there are more than 675,000 licensed nurses although only about 26 per cent of them are currently working in the country.

The Star

Taiwan

Taiwan eases hiring rules to bring in 28,000 more migrant workers



Taiwan will ease employment regulations to allow for the entry of 28,000 additional migrant workers as soon as mid-June to address its worker shortage.

On May 23, the Ministry of Labor (MOL) announced it will relax regulations employing migrant workers in the following industries: manufacturing, construction, agriculture, and caregiving. The sectors will be allotted 600, 8,000, 12,000, and 14,000 extra workers, respectively.

The “notice period” for adjusting the qualifications for hiring

migrant workers will last until May 30.

In the manufacturing industry, there will be 210 companies eligible for the relaxed rules, including 142 aquatic product processing companies, 37 tofu manufacturing firms, and 31 shipbuilders. The MOL plans to increase the allocation ratio of foreign migrant workers from 15% to 20%.

For the construction industry, the new rules will be applied to construction businesses, professional construction companies, and civil engineering contractors that have handled a minimum number of cases and Taiwanese workers over the past three years. These companies can hire migrant workers at a ratio of 30%, and the employment stability fee could increase that number to 40%.

For the agricultural sector, the number of incoming migrant workers will increase from 6,000 to 12,000. This will increase the ratio of migrant workers to local workers employed by individual farmers or small-sized farming operators with less than 10 people from 35% to 50%. The 35% ratio would remain the same for public institutions and large-scale farmers.

As for caregiving, an additional 14,000 workers will be hired. The ratios of one caregiver per three residents in social welfare institutions, one caregiver per five residents at long-term care facilities, and one caregiver per care recipient for live-in caregiving will not change.

Taiwan News

Vietnam

Vietnam announces 90-day visa 'open door policy' to attract foreign tourists

The Government empha-



sised that the extension of e-visa validity to 90 days, three times longer than the current 30 days, will be an open-door policy in attracting more foreigners to visit Việt Nam as well as seek investment and business opportunities, creating a driving force to promote the country's socio-economic development.

The Government has recently reported to the National Assembly regarding the clarification of the National Assembly Standing Committee's opinions on the amended Law on Foreigners' Entry into, Exit from, Transit Through, and Residence in Việt Nam.

Previously, the National Assembly asked the Government to provide more specific arguments for the proposal to extend the validity of e-visas from 30 days to 90 days and the proposal to extend the duration of temporary residence permits at the border gates for visa-exempt unilateral entry visitors from 15 days to 45 days.

The Government stated that since the implementation of the e-visa pilot phase in 2017, the number of foreigners requesting e-visas has been increasing. However, due to the current short duration of 30 days for e-visas, it has not attracted more foreigners as expected.

In particular, foreigners who wish to have a longer stay for vacation, market research or investment opportunities in Việt Nam need relatively longer durations.

Therefore, the Government has proposed to extend the validity of e-visas to three months, valid for single or multiple entries, to meet the long-term vacation needs of international tourists.

The new policy will provide

favourable conditions for foreigners who want to conduct research, market surveys, and promote investment opportunities in Việt Nam, especially for those who need to visit multiple countries in the region and return to Việt Nam to evaluate and compare investment and business opportunities.

Extending the e-visa validity to three months is suitable for foreigners responsible for establishing commercial presence, service providers, and contract suppliers as committed to by Việt Nam in free trade agreements.

According to the Government, the issuance of e-visas for these cases is carried out through pre-approval of personnel. Therefore, compared to unilateral visa exemptions, this policy helps immigration authorities screen individuals who do not meet entry requirements or the requirements of management work.

Regarding the extension of the duration of temporary residence permits at the border gates for visa-exempt unilateral entry visitors from 15 days to 45 days, the Government states that through studies on travel trends, tourists from distant markets such as Europe often have vacations lasting more than 15 days or choose resort and cross-country tour programmes.

Asia News Network

