The Latest on Korea’s Investment Environment

Japan’s Toyoko Inn to advance into Changwon
Japan’s budget hotel chain operator Toyoko Inn Co. has announced plans to build a hotel in the South Korean southeastern city of Changwon by 2020.

Toyoko Inn is set to build a 415-room hotel with 20 stories above ground and one below in Changwon, located 398 kilometers southeast of Seoul. Construction is scheduled to be completed in April 2020, and the hotel will open in the second half of that year.

The groundbreaking ceremony came after the Tokyo-based hotel chain formed an investment pact with the Changwon municipality in December 2016 to buy a site for the construction project.

The Japanese hotel chain operator’s move is aimed at providing accommodation services to businesspeople visiting an industrial park in the city and tourists, Changwon officials said.

Established in 1986, Toyoko Inn operates a total of eight business hotels in the four major South Korean cities — Seoul, Busan, Incheon and Daejeon.

Foreigners turn to net buyers in July
Foreign investors turned to net buyers in the South Korean stock market for the first time in four months in July as they scooped up local shares in the second-quarter earnings season.

Foreigners purchased USD 120 million worth of South Korean shares last month, swinging from net selling of USD 640 million tallied in June, according to the Bank of Korea (BOK).

They had remained net sellers since April, when they dumped USD 2.04 billion worth of South Korean stocks as intensifying U.S.-China trade disputes fueled uncertainties in the global financial sector.

In total, foreigners purchased a net USD 1.43 billion worth in the local equity market last month.

Invested venture firms create thousands of new jobs
Venture companies that received investment in the first half of this year have created more than 2,000 jobs so far, as it pushes to create a venture-friendly environment for innovative growth.

According to the Ministry of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and Startups, 550 companies that received KRW 1.3 trillion (USD 1.14 billion) of funding in the January-June period had 19,456 employees by the end of June, up 2,118 from 17,338 tallied by the end of 2017.

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The ministry forecast the companies which receive investment this year to create more than 5,000 new jobs in total by the end of the year.

Innovative growth is one of the key economic goals sought by the Moon Jae-in administration, along with income-led growth. The government has unveiled a set of support measures to boost innovative growth by providing funding and other incentives to eight key sectors, such as smart farms, smart cities, fintech, drones and electric vehicles and artificial intelligence.

South Korea is Asia’s 3rd safest country
The report measures the prevalence of common crimes, including homicide, kidnapping, burglary, theft, armed robbery and extortion, as well as people’s general perceptions of safety in their communities.

Sources: www.investkorea.org; Yonhap News Agency

What's Trending

Pizza Hut Korea tests robot server, Dilly Plate

For two weeks in August, Pizza Hut Korea launched a test operation of a robot waiter to serve food to customers as the company moves to strengthen its competitiveness through the incorporation of cutting-edge technologies.

The robot, called Dilly Plate, was unveiled at one of its stores in Mok-dong, located in western Seoul, for a two-week test run, marking the first case of adopting such technology in the country’s dining industry, according to the company.

Dilly Plate was developed by Woowa Brothers Corp., a South Korean startup that operates the food delivery app Baedal Minjok (Baemin), along with researchers at Korea University. Dilly Plate is a self-driving robot designed specifically for restaurants can autonomously carry and serve dishes weighing up to 22 kilograms at any one time.

The robot can last eight hours on a single charge, and uses a 3D camera and sensors to control its movement to automatically stop and avoid obstacles as well as people. A spokesperson from Baemin explained that Dilly Plate can move quickly, but that its speed has been limited at Pizza Hut to that of a human’s average walking speed to ensure the safety of both the customers and the pizzas.

Cho Yoon-sang, Pizza Hut Korea’s Chief Marketing Officer, said in a statement, “We will actively adopt new technologies to satisfy both our employees and customers and make various attempts in line with food tech development.”

On the global stage, this was not the first time Pizza Hut introduced non-humans to its wait staff. Japan’s Pepper robot worked for two weekends in March at a Pizza Hut outlet in Singapore.

Meanwhile, since launching its first local outlet in Seoul in 1985, Pizza Hut has expanded to 324 chains in South Korea.