**Invest Korea News**

**KOTRA HOLDS INVESTMENT PROMOTION CONFERENCE IN MILAN**

On the sidelines of the Milan Expo 2015, a conference promoting investment from Europe into Korea was held last month in Milan, Italy. Attended by about 100 European investors, the event began with opening remarks from Jaehong Kim, President and CEO of the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA), followed by a presentation on Korea’s investment environment from the Head of Invest Korea, Kiwon Han.

Project managers from Invest Korea also gave presentations on Korea’s logistics (food and cold chain), fashion and cosmetics industries, and introduced a research and development center project by the Italy-based Ingegneria Dei Sistemi SpA as a successful foreign investment case in Korea.

**FIRST FOREIGN INVESTMENT ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING OF 2015 HELD**

The Office of the Foreign Investment Ombudsman at KOTRA and the Ministry of Trade, Industry & Energy last month co-hosted the Foreign Investment Advisory Council Meeting at the Grand Hyatt Seoul. Attended by about 50 people, including 13 CEOs of major foreign-invested companies in Korea, 10 leaders of foreign chambers of commerce here, the Foreign Investment Ombudsman of KOTRA and government officials, the

**In Brief**

Meeting aimed to respond to issues raised by foreign investors and accept their recommendations. The meeting, this year’s first, is held twice a year.

One focus of the meeting was the designation of 21 foreign investment officers from as many government ministries and organizations to encourage more foreign companies to invest in Korea and facilitate communication between the government and foreign-invested companies.

Meeting participants were also updated on the government’s efforts to tackle the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS).

**Korea News**

**KOREA STARTS FTA NEGOTIATIONS WITH CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES**

Negotiations for a free trade agreement (FTA) between Korea and six Central American countries were declared to have officially started last month. The six countries – Guatemala, Panama, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica – comprise a regional economic bloc called the Secretaria de Integracion Economica Centroamericana (SIECA).

The pact will be a high-level, comprehensive agreement and the six countries' first FTA with an Asian country. The trade volume between Korea and the countries was USD 5 billion last year.

**Foreign Company News**

**SOLVAY CEO VISITS KOREA AMID MERS OUTBREAK**

Belgian chemical company Solvay held a press conference last month at the Millennium Seoul Hilton to celebrate 40 years in Korea. Solvay CEO Jean-Pierre Clamadieu emphasized the importance of the Korean market when asked why he decided to come to Korea in the middle of the MERS outbreak. Clamadieu said the World Health Organization has not recommended travel restrictions to Korea and that it is important for the company to keep its promises to customers and partners.

The global chemical company entered the Korean market in 1975. It established a joint venture, Daehan Precision, with Samsung in 1987. In 1988, Honorary Chairman Baron Daniel Janssen of Solvay Group and Chairman Lee Kun-hee of Samsung Group met to discuss ways to do business. Solvay relocated its global business unit headquarters for specialty chemicals to Korea in 2011, hiring more than 500 workers in Korea alone and recording sales of KRW 500 billion (USD 447 million). The company also cooperated with Korea’s Ewha Womans University and opened the Ewha-Solvay Research & Innovation Center (6,600 m²) in June of 2014.

Having invested a total of KRW 250 billion in Korea over the last decade, Solvay plans to complete the construction of a highly dispersible silica plant in an industrial complex in Saemangeum by October of 2016. Highly dispersible silica is the core material of automobile tires.

**Government & Policy**

**GOVT. ATTRACTS INVESTMENT IN NATIONAL FOOD CLUSTER**

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (MAFRA) will strengthen its efforts to attract investment from Chinese food companies in Korea’s national food cluster.

Eleven Chinese food companies have signed investment agreements with the national food cluster thus far.

MAFRA expects trade and investment between Korea and China to expand with the free trade agreement between the two countries. The ministry has already sent an investment promotion team to Yantai City in China to attract Chinese food companies. MAFRA will use Korean food fairs in foreign countries to promote marketing for agricultural food exports and attract investment in the national food cluster.