

S. Korea receives U.N. investment promotion award

S. Korea's trade investment promotion agency has received an award from a United Nations body in recognition of best practices in promoting investment in healthcare sectors amid the COVID-19 pandemic, officials said on Oct. 20.

Invest Korea, the country's investment promotion unit under the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA), was chosen as the winner of the 2021 Investment Promotion Awards by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), along with Costa Rica and the Netherlands, among 188 trade-related agencies across the globe.

"Invest Korea was recognized for the

wide-ranging coverage of the health sector on its virtual outreach channels, including online tools, sector guides and reports, information about investment opportunities, and incentives and databases on potential partners," UNCTAD said in a press release.

The agency attracted foreign investment worth USD 18.21 billion in healthcare and other sectors during the first nine months of this year in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic by proactively launching promotion campaigns online, the KOTRA officials said. It is the first time since 2007 that the KOTRA or its affiliated agencies received the U.N. award.

German tech firm Merck to invest USD 693 mln in S. Korea by 2025

Germany-based technology firm Merck Group said on Oct. 8 that it plans to invest around USD 693 million in S. Korea through 2025 in the electronics sector, including semiconductor solutions.

The investment by Merck is expected to lend hands to S. Korea's so-called K-semiconductor blueprint, and help the country secure a stable supply chain of related materials, according to the Ministry of Trade, Industry and

Energy.

The company entered the S. Korean market in 1989 and currently operates 11 research and production facilities across the country, with some 1,400 employees.

"The investment from Merck will allow S. Korea to secure a stable supply chain (of semiconductor materials), and secure advanced technologies and workforces," Industry Minister Moon Sung-wook said in a statement.

FDI pledges to S. Korea up 41.3 pct through Sept.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) pledges made to S. Korea jumped a whopping 41.3 percent on-year in the first nine months of 2021 despite the COVID-19 pandemic, data showed on Oct. 7.

Foreigners pledged to make investments of USD 18.2 billion during the January-September period here, compared with USD 12.8 billion a year earlier, according to the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy. "The sharp growth came as global investors became more confident over S. Korea's stable business environment amid the COVID-19 pandemic," the ministry said in a statement.

Notably, the service sector saw its FDI

pledges move up 60.8 percent over the period to reach USD 14.3 billion.

By country, FDI pledges from the United States moved up 8.6 percent to hit USD 3.3 billion, led mostly by the service sector. Investment from the European Union and Britain came to USD 7.3 billion in the January-September period, more than doubling from the previous year amid aggressive merger and acquisition activities. From Japan, S. Korea won investment pledges of USD 730 million, up 33.8 percent from the previous year. The combined FDI pledges from China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and Malaysia rose 25.7 percent to USD 5 billion, the data also showed.

Chips boost ICT exports to new high in Aug.

S. Korea's exports of information and communication technology (ICT) products reached a record high last month, data showed on Sept. 14, on the back of continued robust global demand for chips and displays.

Outbound shipments of ICT products stood at USD 20.3 billion last month, up 33.2 percent from a year earlier, according to the

data from the Ministry of Science and ICT.

S. Korea's ICT exports were buoyed by strong demand for semiconductors, with chip shipments jumping 42.2 percent on-year to USD 11.8 billion.

S. Korea's outbound shipments in August grew 35 percent on-year to USD 53.2 billion, underpinning recovery momentum in Asia's fourth-largest economy.

Trade & Commerce

S. Korea's yearly trade volume tops USD 1 tln at fastest pace ever

S. Korea's trade volume for this year surpassed the USD 1 trillion mark on Oct. 26 on the back of solid export growth amid the global recovery from the pandemic, reaching the milestone at the fastest pace ever, the trade ministry said.

S. Korea made the achievement within the shortest period of time since 1956 when the country began compiling data on trade. It

came 21 days earlier than the previous record, which was set on Nov. 16, 2018.

Industry Minister Moon Seung-wook vowed to extend support for exporters, saying S. Korea "made the achievement despite the global shipping slowdown, the protracted COVID-19 pandemic, supply channel disruptions."

As of July, S. Korea was the world's eighth largest trading nation.

Industry

Consumer sentiment rises to 4-month high in Oct. amid expanded vaccination

S. Korea's consumer sentiment rose to the highest level in four months in October as an accelerated pace of COVID-19 vaccination raised hope for a return to normal life, central bank data showed on Oct. 27.

The composite consumer sentiment index (CCSI) came in at 106.8 in October, up 3 points from the previous month, according to the data from the Bank of Korea. The reading is the highest since the index rose to 110.3 in

June. A reading above 100 means optimists outnumber pessimists.

The government is to introduce a new scheme, dubbed "Living with COVID-19," next month, under which most of long-enforced restrictions on gatherings and business operation will be eased as the country has fully vaccinated over 70 percent of its 52 million population.

Government & Policy

S. Korea sees tenfold rise in hydrogen fuel use by 2030

S. Korea will sharply increase the adoption of hydrogen as a fuel of transportation, industrial plants and power generators to become the world's leading hydrogen economy, President Moon Jae-in said on Oct. 7.

The government will provide all-around support, including debt payment guarantees and tax deductions, to hydrogen-related companies and their overseas hydrogen projects with an aim to create 30 leading hydrogen companies by 2030. By then, the government plans to boost domestic hydrogen consumption over tenfold to 3.9 million tons from this year's estimated 220,000 tons, according to Minister of Trade, Industry and Energy Moon Sung-wook.

The minister unveiled the plan, entitled "The benefit of the hydrogen economy and the government's vision as a leading hydrogen economy," in a briefing to President Moon and the country's leading business leaders on the

sidelines of the groundbreaking ceremony for Hyundai Mobis' hydrogen fuel cell plants in Incheon, west of Seoul.

During the event, President Moon said the government will push forward the plan to make clean hydrogen the country's future growth driver.

The 2030 consumption target of hydrogen is twice as much as the government's previously stated number of 1.94 million tons by 2030, disclosed in January 2019 as part of its road map toward a hydrogen economy.

By 2050, S. Korea plans to increase domestic hydrogen consumption over tenfold to 27 million tons, compared to 2030. Clean hydrogen, which emits zero carbon dioxide (CO₂) during the production process, will account for half of the country's hydrogen consumption by 2030 and then 100% by 2050, by when the country aims to achieve carbon neutrality.