

### **S. Korea to ease regulations to boost foreign investment**

S. Korea will ease regulations on imports of electric vehicles, chemical substances and other items in an effort to attract more foreign investment to the country, the industry ministry said on Dec. 8.

They are part of 40 major measures that the government came up with to revamp imports and investment rules, after a total of 454 such requests from foreign companies here had been made through surveys and meetings conducted earlier this year.

The largest share of the demand, or 27 percent, was about rules on examination and certification, followed by environment and labor regulations, according to the Ministry of Trade,

Industry and Energy.

Of the measures, the government decided to revise process and conditions of required tests on the imports of EVs and plug-in hybrid vehicles to meet international standards.

It will also relax rules on bringing in restricted chemical substances and foreign firms' management of facilities inside free economic zones, according to the ministry.

During the first nine months of this year, foreign direct investment pledges to S. Korea hit an all-time high of USD 21.52 billion on the back of solid growth in investment in such advanced sectors as chips and batteries, government data showed.

### **Trade & Commerce**

### **S. Korea to report best ever exports performance this year: trade ministry**

S. Korea is expected to log a record annual value of exports this year to become the world's sixth-largest exporter despite a global economic slowdown, the trade ministry said on Dec. 5.

The value of the country's exports is expected to come to over USD 680 billion for this year, which will be larger than an all-time high of USD 644.4 billion set the previous year, according to the Ministry of Trade, Industry and

Energy.

The country rose to the world's No. 6 exporter this year, up by one notch from the previous year, according to the ministry.

The performance was on the back of solid demand for the country's major export items, including semiconductors and petro products, as well as the record high sales of electric vehicles, secondary cells, and military items.

### **Vietnam emerges as S. Korea's No. 3 trading partner**

Vietnam will finish this year as S. Korea's No. 3 trading partner and the country with which the latter has the largest trade surplus, a study has shown.

The Federation of Korean Industries on Dec. 21 released an analysis on trade between the two countries from 1992, when they formed diplomatic ties, to last year to mark the 30th anniversary of bilateral relations.

The report said Korea has kept a trade surplus

with Vietnam since posting USD 300 million in 1992. This year, the 30th anniversary of ties, the black figure reached USD 31.3 billion, surpassing the surplus with the US of USD 25.4 billion as the highest among Korea's trading partners.

Since forming ties three decades ago, both countries have seen bilateral trade jump 161 times from USD 500 million in 1992 to USD 80.7 billion last year.

## Industry

**Korean steelmakers accelerate advance into green energy sector**

S. Korean steel firms are accelerating their advance into the sustainable, green energy sector, ranging from hydrogen power to secondary battery materials, amid the world's fast low-carbon energy transition.

Choi Jeong-woo, CEO of POSCO Group, S. Korea's largest steel making business group, met with Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese in Australia on Thursday (local time) and discussed eco-friendly business cooperation, the company said on Dec. 2.

Other Korean steel and metal firms are also actively seeking growth through green business.

Young Poong, a global leader in non-ferrous

metal production, and its affiliate Korea Zinc have been actively expanding their secondary battery materials business.

Korea Zinc is driving new business development through hydrogen, battery materials, and resource recycling businesses. It has been actively forging partnerships with sectoral leaders, including battery giant LG Chem and energy solutions provider Hanwha, for co-investment and technology collaboration.

SeAH Besteel will start using power generated through solar farms for steel production in Korea from the first half of 2023.

## Government &amp; Policy

**S. Korea to boost fintech fund to 1 trillion won**

S. Korea's financial authorities have decided to increase the size of the Fintech Innovation Fund from KRW 500 billion (USD 379 million) to 1 trillion won to support fintech firms suffering from the liquidity crunch on rising interest rates and concerns over an economic downturn.

Kim Joo-hyun, chair of the Financial Services Commission (FSC), attended the Next Round 2022: Fintech Special Round, hosted by the Korea Development Bank (KDB) on Dec. 7 and announced plans to foster the fintech industry.

The Fintech Innovation Fund, of which the

goal was to invest a total of KRW 500 billion in fostering and discovering promising fintech firms between 2020 and 2023, will expand to 1 trillion won as an additional KRW 500 billion will be injected over the next four years (2024-2027), Kim explained.

The fund was created in December 2019 with investments from major financial holding companies, banks and Koscom to make more investment funding available for innovative fintech firms.

**S. Korean unveils plans to attract 30 million visitors by 2027**

The S. Korean government unveiled measures, including easing travel-related restrictions, in its efforts to attract 30 million tourists by 2027 as borders around the world reopen amid easing in Covid policies.

Under the 2023-2027 tourism promotion basic plan, the government will designate 2023 and 2024 as Visit Korea years and hold K-tourism road shows in 50 cities around the world. It will aim to bring in 30 million foreign visitors in

2027 and raise USD 30 billion in travel income.

Korea in 2019, before the pandemic, attracted 17.5 million foreign visitors and raised USD 20.7 billion in income.

"Visit Korea Year will allow our travel industry to overcome difficulties from Covid-19 and leap forward," Prime Minister Han Duck-soo said at a national tourism strategy meeting in Seoul.