

Samsung, ASML invest USD 760 mn in joint EUV research facility

Samsung Electronics Co. and Dutch semiconductor equipment company ASML Holding N.V. agreed to jointly invest KRW 1 trillion (USD 758 million) in building a facility in S. Korea to research next-generation extreme ultraviolet (EUV) lithography equipment technology during Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol's state visit to the Netherlands.

The duo signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for a joint R&D center on Dec. 12 following Yoon's visit to the ASML

headquarters in Veldhoven, along with King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands.

The Dutch company also signed an MOU with another Korean chipmaker, SK hynix Inc., for the development of recycling technology for hydrogen gas used in EUV.

The Korean Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Energy and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands also signed an MOU outlining the establishment of the Korea-Netherlands advanced semiconductor academy.

Lam Research Korea Prepares to Relocate to Yongin Campus in July 2024

Lam Research Corp., an American supplier of wafer-fabrication equipment and related services to the semiconductor industry, is intensifying its commitment to S. Korea by relocating its facilities to create a combined campus in Yongin, Gyeonggi Province.

Back in April of last year, the 30,000-square-foot R&D facility in Giheung District, Yongin, was officially inaugurated. In November 2021, the facility under construction welcomed Sense.i, a state-of-the-art wafer etching equipment, further bolstering Lam Research's technological capabilities.

Lam Research's investment in Korea continues to grow. An office building is currently under construction within the Yongin com-

plex housing the KTC, slated for completion in July next year. Once finished, both the technical training center in Dongtan and the Pangyo headquarters will be relocated and expanded within the Yongin complex.

Korea is a strategically important market for Lam Research given that the country, led by Samsung Electronics Co. and SK hynix Inc., holds the largest share in the global memory chip market.

Lam Research is the first global semiconductor equipment company to operate all of its key operations in the K-Semiconductor Belt in Yongin, including manufacturing, logistics, marketing, sales, customer support, training, and R&D.

Trade & Commerce

Korea signs FTA with Gulf Cooperation Council

S. Korea clinched a free trade agreement (FTA) with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), a group of six Middle Eastern countries, on Dec. 28, making the country a more competitive exporter of automobiles and defense products.

Under the agreement, Korea will eliminate tariffs on 89.9 percent of all items and the GCC will remove tariffs on 76.4 percent of all products.

The GCC countries are Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and Kuwait.

Exports of eco-friendly cars jump 33 pct to record high in 2023

S. Korea's exports of eco-friendly vehicles surged 32.5 percent on-year to a record high during the first 11 months of 2023 on solid global demand for electric vehicles (EVs), data showed on Dec. 24.

The export volume of eco-friendly automobiles came to 662,307 units during the January-November period, compared with 499,854 units a year earlier, according to the data by the Korea Automobile and Mobility

Association.

The number for the entire 2023 is expected to surpass 700,000 for the first time ever, officials said.

This year's sales growth was driven by the popularity of EVs and hybrid models. Of the total eco-friendly vehicles sold this year, 316,654 were EVs, followed by 283,685 units of hybrid models and plug-in hybrid cars with 61,694.

Trade & Commerce

Exports of S. Korea TV programs top USD 500 mln in 2022

Exports of S. Korean-made TV programs soared nearly 30 percent on-year to a record high in 2022 thanks to rising demand from global streaming platforms, a government report showed on Dec. 25.

A total of USD 561.3 million worth of Korean TV content was sold overseas in 2022, up 29.6 percent, or USD 128.1 million, from a year earlier, according to an annual report

on the local broadcasting industry by the Ministry of Science and ICT and the Korea Communications Commission.

It is the first time that the yearly figure has exceeded the USD 500 million threshold, it added. The report said robust overseas sales of Korean TV drama series to global streamers led the sharp on-year increase in exports.

Industry

Regional GDP climbs 3.9 pct in 2022 on rising manufacturing sector

The gross regional domestic product (GRDP) in S. Korea rose 3.9 percent in 2022 on-year, led by gains in the manufacturing industry, data showed on Dec. 22.

The GRDP was tallied at KRW 2,166 trillion (USD 1.67 trillion) last year, up KRW 82 trillion from a year earlier, according to the data provided by Statistics Korea.

The GRDP of Gyeonggi Province that surrounds Seoul came to KRW 547 trillion last year, the largest amount among the country's 17 cities and regions, followed by Seoul with KRW 486 trillion and South Chungcheong Province with KRW 128 trillion.

The greater Seoul area, which includes Gyeonggi and the western port city of Incheon, reported a KRW 1,137 trillion GRDP last year, representing 52.5 percent of the total.

Per-capita GRDP came to KRW 41.95 million last year, up 4.2 percent from a year earlier, the data showed.

Seoul, South Chungcheong Province and the southeastern industrial city of Ulsan saw their regional per-capita GRDP exceed the national average, while such regions as the southeastern city of Daegu and the southern resort island of Jeju remained below the average.

Last year's growth came as output from the mining and manufacturing sector added 1.4 percent on-year. The construction sector and the service field also logged on-year expansions of 1.7 percent and 4.1 percent, respectively.

The gross regional income went up 4.3 percent to KRW 2,197 trillion last year, and per-capita income totaled KRW 23.39 million by rising 5.8 percent on-year.

By region, Seoul reported the largest per-capita income of KRW 26.61 million, followed by Ulsan with KRW 26.07 million and the central city of Daejeon with KRW 24.22 million, the data showed.

Government & Policy

S. Korea to spend USD 2.3 bn to quadruple robot market by 2030

S. Korea's public and private sectors will together invest more than KRW 3 trillion (USD 2.3 billion) by 2030 to nearly quadruple the domestic robot market to KRW 20 trillion (USD 15 billion) to relieve labor shortages in the country with the world's lowest birth rate, the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy said on Dec. 14.

To spur growth in the robot market, estimated at KRW 5.6 trillion in 2021, the country will

concentrate on eight core technologies: servomotors, reducers, sensors, grippers, controllers, autonomous movement software, autonomous operation software and human-robot interaction.

Under the plan, one million robots will likely be deployed in various sectors from manufacturing to agriculture, logistics, services, national defense, social safety and medical care in the country by 2030, the ministry said.