

Foreign Direct Investment

FDI pledges to S. Korea hit record high in 2024 on rise in manufacturing sector

Foreign direct investment (FDI) pledges to S. Korea rose 5.7 percent from a year earlier in 2024 to hit a fresh high for the second consecutive year, driven by a sharp increase in the manufacturing sector, data showed on Jan. 7.

S. Korea received USD 34.5 billion worth of FDI commitments last year, surpassing the previous record of USD 32.7 billion posted in 2023, according to the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy.

By industry, FDI pledges in the manufacturing sector jumped 21.6 percent to USD 14.5 billion, with those in the material, parts and equipment sectors surging 52.7 percent to USD 11.1 billion.

The ministry added that FDI pledges in the semiconductor industry rose 46.5 percent to USD 1.3 billion, and those in the bio-health industry more than tripled to USD 1.2 billion.

S-Oil to establish GTG in Ulsan with KRW 263 bn investment

On Jan. 23, Ulsan-si announced that it will sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with S-Oil for the establishment of a "Gas Turbine Generator (GTG) for natural gas."

This agreement is aimed at supporting the government's energy policy direction through the investment in the GTG facility, and also aims to stimulate the local economy and create jobs.

Under the agreement, S-Oil will invest KRW 263 billion to build a 121 MW natural gas GTG facility at its Ulsan plant in the Onsan National Industrial Complex, which will account for 24 percent of the plant's current electricity usage.

The facility is scheduled to break ground in February and be completed by December of next year.

Global big tech companies including Google and Amazon are flocking to Cheonan

Global big tech companies, including Google Cloud, Amazon, and NVIDIA, which rank among the top five in market capitalization on the global stock markets, are flocking to Cheonan, Chungnam-do.

Starting with a memorandum of understanding signed in November last year with Dassault Systemes, a French virtual twin solution company, to cooperate on smart city development, the city signed an agreement with Amazon to revitalize the smart

city industry ecosystem and establish a global cooperation framework in December.

This year, the city has held discussions with companies like Google Cloud on related education, workforce training, startup support, and assistance with international expansion.

The city also held a meeting with NVIDIA, a leader in AI semiconductors, to discuss smart city projects on January 13.

Trade & Commerce

Exports from free trade zones log record USD 14.9 bln in 2024

S. Korea exported a record USD 14.9 billion worth of products from its free trade zones (FTZs) last year on strong global demand for automobiles, ships and semiconductors, the industry ministry said on Feb 4.

The combined outbound shipments from 13 FTZs across the country jumped 22.5 percent from USD 12.1 billion in 2023 to

reach an all-time high, according to the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy.

It also marked the fourth consecutive year the figure exceeded USD 10 billion.

FTZs are special economic zones where various tax and tariff benefits are provided to guarantee more freedom in manufacturing, logistics and trade.

Industry

3 S. Korean shipbuilders rank among top 10 in global new orders

Three S. Korean shipbuilders were on the list of the world's top 10 companies by new global orders in 2024, while the remaining seven spots were claimed by Chinese shipyards, industry data showed on Jan. 26.

Samsung Heavy Industries Co. ranked fifth on the list, based on new orders measured in compensated gross tons (CGTs), and Hanwha Ocean Co. and HD Hyundai

Samho Heavy Industries Co. followed in sixth and seventh places, according to the data by London-based Clarkson Research Services.

Insiders noted that the results highlight S. Korean shipbuilders' performance in securing large-scale orders and maintaining significant backlogs to ensure steady production in the coming years.

Cruise tourists nearly triple in 2024 on post-pandemic recovery

The number of visitors to S. Korea traveling on cruises nearly tripled in 2024 from a year earlier, driven by post-pandemic travel demand, data showed on Jan. 23.

Around 810,000 tourists visited S. Korea on cruise ships in 2024, compared with 273,000 a year earlier, according to data compiled by the Ministry of Oceans and

Fisheries.

The number of cruises arriving at S. Korean ports also reached 414 in 2024, up from 203 the previous year, the data showed.

In 2025, the oceans ministry said the number of tourists on cruise ships is expected to reach 1.1 million.

Government & Policy

Science ministry designates 10 technologies to innovate bio industry

The science ministry said on Jan. 20 that it has designated 10 technologies that will innovate the bio industry in the next decade.

The technologies are human immunome, multi-cancer early detection, ribonucleic acid structurome, artificial intelligence (AI)-designed gene editors, anti-aging antibodies, molecular glue, motile living biobots, digital

artificial organs, bio foundation model and health care digital twin, according to the Ministry of Science and ICT.

The technologies will likely be applied in bio and other industries, including medical, space and manufacturing, in the next five to 10 years.

S. Korea to invest 208.8 bln won in promoting global technology cooperation

S. Korea will spend 208.8 billion won (USD 143.7 million) this year on global technology cooperation projects as part of efforts to bolster the country's technological competitiveness, the industry ministry said on Feb. 5.

In detail, S. Korea plans to funnel 94.2 billion won into international projects aimed at fostering technology developments through bilateral cooperation or participation in multilateral funding programs, such as Eureka and Eurostars, led by the European Union.

The country will inject an additional 105.2 billion won into creating industrial technology collaboration centers at top-tier research institutions across the globe and launching mid- to long-term joint research projects to develop core technologies for future growth engines, according to the ministry.

Another KRW 3.5 billion will be spent on promoting global entities' investment in local research and development (R&D) projects and cooperation between local and foreign companies.