

# REGIONAL DIGEST

## Quotable

**“Although the economy in general enjoys high-level growth, the gap in income and development between cities and rural communities is huge.”**

### SOUPHANH KEOMIXAY,

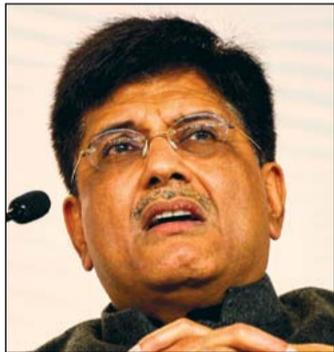
minister of planning and investment in Laos, noting the unbalanced GDP growth across the country.

**“Private corporations regardless of size should ... recognize the fact that they would be financially better off should they encourage women in society.”**

### CHRISTINE LAGARDE,

managing director of the International Monetary Fund, discussing the South Korean economy with President Moon Jae-in on a visit to Seoul.

**“This is an occasion to celebrate the advent of the most modern technology in India.”**



### PIYUSH GOYAL,

India's railway minister, as the foundation stone for the country's first bullet train was laid in Ahmedabad, capital of the western state of Gujarat. The railway will connect the city with Mumbai.



**A Malaysian-Chinese devotee** offers prayers in front of a paper statue of the Chinese deity Da Shi Ye, the Guardian God of Ghosts, on Sept 12 to mark the Hungry Ghost Festival in Kuala Lumpur. During the festival, food offerings are made while paper money, statues and joss sticks are burned to keep the spirits of dead ancestors happy and to bring good luck. AFP

## Agent-banking service grows in Bangladesh

About 330,000 agent-banking accounts were opened in the first half of the year in Bangladesh, an increase of 60 percent compared with the end of 2016.

Agent banking means providing limited financial services through engaged agents under a valid agency agreement. It is aimed at the country's underserved population, especially those in remote and rural areas.

This channel is also increasingly becoming the medium of choice for migrant workers to send money back to Bangladesh because there is no additional fee to withdraw money from accounts.

## Transport links key for Malaysian developer

Malaysian conglomerate Sunway plans to acquire more land with good connections to new public infrastructure for transit-oriented development (TOD).

TOD maximizes the amount of residential, business and leisure space within walking distance of public transport.

Sarena Cheah, managing direc-

tor of Sunway's property division for Malaysia and Singapore, said the group had acquired five plots of land in the Klang Valley worth 5.5 billion ringgit (\$1.3 billion). Malaysia has been building mass rapid transit (MRT) lines in the Klang Valley, which is centered on Kuala Lumpur, in recent years.

Cheah was speaking after the announcement of the opening of the Sunway Velocity Hotel in Kuala Lumpur, which is connected to an MRT station, mall, park, and office and residential buildings.

## Study shows impact of India's air pollution

Meeting international standards for air quality as set by the World Health Organization could add four years to the life expectancy of people in India, according to a study from the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago (EPIC).

EPIC used the Air Quality-Life Index, which translates particulate pollution concentrations into their impact on life spans, to analyze the condition in 50 Indian cities.

“High levels of air pollution are a part of people's lives in India, just as they were in the United States, England, Japan and other

countries in the past,” said Michael Greenstone, director of EPIC. “The last several decades have seen tremendous progress in many of these countries, but this progress did not happen by accident, it was the result of policy choices.”

## Japan imports chicken products from Vietnam

The first batch of Vietnamese chicken was exported to Tokyo on Sept 9, marking a milestone in the country's efforts to enter the Japanese market.

The 30 tons of chicken wings, thighs and breasts were shipped by Koyu & Unitek Co, a joint venture between Australia and Japan.

“The first shipment proves Vietnamese food products are clean, good and reasonably priced because Japan is quite a strict market with high requirements on product quality,” said Nguyen Xuan Cuong, minister for agriculture and rural development.

## Philippines fast tracks China-funded projects

The Philippine government has streamlined the approval process for major infrastructure projects fund-

ed by China, the country's Department of Finance said on Sept 12.

During a meeting between Philippine economic managers and a visiting Chinese delegation led by Zhong Shan, China's commerce minister, the two sides noted the “substantial progress made in revitalizing and strengthening economic relations between their two countries”.

The first projects to be financed by China include the planned New Centennial Water Source-Kaliwa Dam Project and the Chico River Pump Irrigation Project.

## Laos PM urges reform at state-owned firms

Laos Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith has stressed the need for further reform of state-owned enterprises to make them more efficient and profitable.

Inefficient state enterprises need to be improved, particularly Lao Airlines, Electricite du Laos and some state-owned commercial banks, he said.

The prime minister said the reforms could be done through a number of approaches, which include enhancing the capacity of executive boards and staff, and hiring professional managers to improve the quality of administration.

Another approach could be to convert state-owned enterprises into a form of investment or joint ownership by partnering with other shareholders.

## S Korean retailers target solo households

South Korea's retailers aim to attract solo drinkers with gift packages targeting single households as a growing number of people opt to live alone, industry sources said on Sept 12.

The percentage of South Koreans living alone stood at 27.2 percent in 2015. This is expected to rise to 29.6 percent in 2019 to become the most common household type in the country for the first time, according to government data.

Shinsegae Department Store said it has introduced a variety of traditional Korean alcohol gift sets with a 125-milliliter bottle for easy consumption by solo drinkers.

AGENCIES — ASIA NEWS NETWORK

## PRINTING

**Australia:** Printed by Spotpress Pty Ltd, 24 Lillian Fowler Place, Marrickville, Sydney, NSW 2204. Tel: 61-2-9549 1159

**Brunei:** Imported in Brunei for distribution by Syarikat Bayu Ilham, No: 35A, Simpang 246, Kg. Sungai Akar Jalan Muara, Bsb, Bc3915 Brunei Darussalam. Tel: 673-2336492

**Cambodia:** TST Printing #79, St. 271, S/k Toek Laak 3, Khan Toul Kork, 12158 Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

**Dubai, UAE:** Masar Printing & Publishing, P.O. Box 485100, Dubai, U.A.E. Tel: 971-4-5519685

**Hong Kong:** Joint Printing Company Limited, 2-3/F, Hing Wai Centre, 7 Tin Wan Praya Road, Aberdeen, Hong Kong. Tel: 852-3465 5430

**India:** Imported in India for distribution by Media Star, 20, Vaswani Mansion, 120, Dinshaw Vachha Road, Churchgate, Mumbai - 400020. Tel: 022-42202101

**Indonesia:** In association with The Jakarta Post.

**Japan:** Printed by ST Tonichi, ST building 2F, 2-1-30, Etchujima, Koto-ku, Tokyo 135-0044. Tel: 81-3-3820-1227

**Malaysia:** Twinstar Synergy Sdn Bhd, Lot 2A, Jalan 13/2, Seksyen 13, 46200, Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia. Tel: 603-7495-1188

**Myanmar:** Aye Yar Won, 9 Kyan Sitthar Road, Kyan Sitthar Yeik Mon industrial Zone, South Dagaon Township Yangon.

**Philippines:** Brown Madonna Press, Inc Km. 15 Sun Valley Drive, South Super Highway, Parañaque City Philippines. Tel: 63-2-2266999

**Republic of Korea:** Printed by JoongAng Ilbo, 88 Seosomun-ro, Jung-gu, Seoul, Korea 100-130. Publisher: Dow Distribution Inc., #757-1 Shinhan DM Building, 25 Mapodaero, Mapo-gu, Seoul, 04167, Korea. Tel: 02-1688-2952

**Singapore:** Twinstar Synergy Sdn Bhd, Lot 2A, Jalan 13/2, Seksyen 13, 46200, Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia. Tel: 603-7495-1188

**Thailand:** Published with The Nation, a member of Asia News Network. Tel: 66-2-3383333