

Vietnam set to OK higher tax on multinationals as part of global agreement

HANOI — Vietnam's parliament is set to approve on Wednesday a top-up tax for multinationals, which will raise the effective rate of the corporate levy to 15% from January in line with a global agreement.

Vietnam had initially planned to combine the approval of the tax with measures to partly compensate large foreign investors affected by the higher levy, including South Korean electronics giant Samsung Electronics Co. Ltd. and US chipmaker Intel Corp., but the separate resolution is not on the parliament's agenda.

In a sign of how controversial the new tax is, as it could reduce Vietnam's appeal among foreign companies if not matched with accompanying subsidies, the parliament had initially ruled out

a vote in its current session, the last of the year.

But it has eventually added it back to its schedule, with the vote on the tax expected now at the last day of its month-long session.

It is unclear whether additional incentives for some foreign investors could be adopted in this session in separate legislation, without passing a specific resolution on that. The parliament could in any case adopt the incentives resolution in a later session.

Under the new rules being shepherded through by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), companies paying less than 15% in a low-tax jurisdiction will face a top-up levy either in that jurisdiction or in their home country from next year. — **Reuters**

US, other countries ink pact to make AI 'secure by design'

WASHINGTON — The United States (US), Britain and more than a dozen other countries on Sunday unveiled what a senior US official described as the first detailed international agreement on how to keep artificial intelligence (AI) safe from rogue actors, pushing for companies to create AI systems that are "secure by design."

In a 20-page document unveiled Sunday, the 18 countries agreed that companies designing and using AI need to develop and deploy it in a way that keeps customers and the wider public safe from misuse.

The agreement is non-binding and carries mostly general recommendations such as monitoring AI systems for abuse, protecting data from tampering and vetting software suppliers.

Still, the director of the US Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, Jen Easterly, said it was important that so many countries put their names to the idea that AI systems needed to be put safety first.

"This is the first time that we have seen an affirmation that these capabilities should not

just be about cool features and how quickly we can get them to market or how we can compete to drive down costs," Ms. Easterly told Reuters, saying the guidelines represent "an agreement that the most important thing that needs to be done at the design phase is security."

The agreement is the latest in a series of initiatives — few of which carry teeth — by governments around the world to shape the development of AI, whose weight is increasingly being felt in industry and society at large.

In addition to the United States and Britain, the 18 countries that signed on to the new guidelines include Germany, Italy, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Poland, Australia, Chile, Israel, Nigeria and Singapore.

The framework deals with questions of how to keep AI technology from being hijacked by hackers and includes recommendations such as only releasing models after appropriate security testing.

It does not tackle thorny questions around the appropriate uses of AI, or

how the data that feeds these models is gathered.

The rise of AI has fed a host of concerns, including the fear that it could be used to disrupt the democratic process, turbocharge fraud, or lead to dramatic job loss, among other harms.

Europe is ahead of the United States on regulations around AI, with lawmakers there drafting AI rules. France, Germany and Italy also recently reached an agreement on how artificial intelligence should be regulated that supports "mandatory self-regulation through codes of conduct" for so-called foundation models of AI, which are designed to produce a broad range of outputs.

The Biden administration has been pressing lawmakers for AI regulation, but a polarized US Congress has made little headway in passing effective regulation.

The White House sought to reduce AI risks to consumers, workers, and minority groups while bolstering national security with a new executive order in October. — **Reuters**



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