



Media Report for The Tasmanian Department of Economic Development and Tourism 22-28 August 2009

Politics/Economy/Social

Friday, 28 August, 2009

Jobless Rate Hits Record 5.7% In July

Japan's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate rose 0.3 percentage point from the previous month to a record 5.7% in July, surpassing the previous record high of 5.5% logged in April 2003, the Ministry of Internal Affairs said Friday.

Meanwhile, the ratio of job offers to job seekers released the same day by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare declined 0.01 point on the month to 0.42, marking a new low for the third consecutive month.

(The Nikkei Aug. 28 morning edition)

Thursday, 27 August, 2009

Japan-Australia EPA will take time: Australian Ambassador

On 27 August, Australian Ambassador to Japan Mr Murray McLean spoke about the proposed Japan-Australia FTA/EPA at a Meat and Livestock Association (MLA) event held at the Australian Embassy in Tokyo. Ambassador McLean said that no matter what the outcome of the upcoming general election, Australia would continue to work on concluding an FTA/EPA with the Japanese Government. He also commented on the outlook for the negotiations, saying that the conclusion of an agreement would take time.

The Australian Government is actively pursuing an EPA agreement with Japan. Ambassador McLean indicated that Australia was eager to expand its beef exports, saying that Australian beef producers were very keen to conclude an EPA (with Japan). The event was held to farewell MLA's outgoing Regional Manager for Japan, Samantha Jamieson, and to welcome her successor, Glen Feist.

(Full translation from *JA News*, 28 August 2009, morning, p. 3)

Friday, 28 August, 2009

Seven-Eleven Japan To Open Energy-Saving Stores

Seven-Eleven Japan Co. is launching a new style of energy-conserving store to appeal to environmentally conscious shoppers, with the first slated to open on Monday in the Tama district of Tokyo.

The energy-saving stores were developed with the cooperation of companies such as Kyocera Corp. and Asahi Glass Co. Their primary characteristic is an opening in the roof that allows natural sunlight into the interior. The so-called top light is positioned over the store's aisles and uses a highly heat-insulating glass to prevent heat from entering the store.

In addition, solar panels are installed on the roof and generate electricity used in lighting the interior and the store's box-lunch case. All lights are LED fixtures, which reduce power consumption by around 40% compared with fluorescent bulbs.

The stores are designed so they will not need to purchase electricity from the power company during daylight hours while retaining the same brightness as conventional stores.

By incorporating other measures, such as energy-saving refrigerators and freezers, Seven-Eleven Japan expects the new stores to consume 30% less power than the per-store average in fiscal 2008.

(The Nikkei Aug. 28 morning edition)

Tuesday, 25 August, 2009

Broome tells Taiji dolphin hunting will result in suspension of sister-city relationship

The north-western Australian town of Broome notified the Japanese Consulate General in Perth on Monday that it would suspend its 28-year-long sister-city relationship with Taiji, Wakayama Prefecture, due to concerns about the Japanese town's traditional dolphin hunting activities. The Broome Shire Council said that it would sever ties with Taiji, as long as the town continued its dolphin cull. On Saturday, the Council unanimously voted to end the sister-city relationship with Taiji.

The US-based anti-whaling organisation Sea Shepherd, which opposes dolphin hunting in Taiji, reportedly pressured the Council and the people of Broome to suspend the relationship after a documentary, *The Cove*, was released in the United States and Australia in July. The film documents dolphin hunting practices in Taiji and was filmed secretly in the Japanese town.

The Shire of Broome said that it had received more than 10,000 e-mails criticising the sister-city relationship from within Australia and from around the world after Sea Shepherd posted the e-mail address of the Shire of Broome on its website. Shire President Graeme Campbell told *the Yomiuri Shimbun* that the issue had the potential to harm residents with Japanese heritage if the Shire Council did not respond properly. He added that the Shire had to make a tough decision.

(Full translation from *the Yomiuri Shimbun*, 25 August 2009, morning, p.37, Tetsu Okazaki, Sydney)

Thursday, 27 August, 2009

Australian Government approves Gorgon gas development project

On 26 August, the Australian Government officially approved the Gorgon Project, a joint venture to develop an undersea gas field off the northwest coast of Australia, operated by a consortium including major US oil companies Chevron Corp. and Exxon Mobil Corp.

The companies behind the plan, including Chevron, had been in negotiations with the Australian Government regarding measures to protect the environment and other issues. (Translator: M. Shimizu)

(Full translation from *the Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, 27 August 2009, morning, p. 9, Sydney Bureau)

Industry/Market – Japan

Thursday, 27 August, 2009

Warts And All, Imperfect Veggies Being Snapped Up

Slightly bruised, blemished or imperfect vegetables, food and other items with unsightly appearances but without quality issues are enjoying increased demand amid rising prices.

Nichirei Corp. has teamed with a farming corporation in Chiba Prefecture to buy carrots, tomatoes and spinach from around 200 farmers for processing or sale to restaurant operators and foodmakers. Nichirei completed a processing centre in July that is anticipated handling roughly 2,240 tons of produce a year. The bulk of that will be irregular-shaped produce that it is unable to sell.

Seven & i Holdings Co. will market imperfect vegetables grown at its directly run farm. White radishes, which usually sell for 150 yen in mint condition, will carry a price tag of 98 yen. Pickles made from such vegetables and sold at some Ito-Yokado Co. supermarkets since spring have been given the thumbs-up from consumers. In the future, the holding company plans to continue such efforts.

And roughly 150 Ito-Yokado stores on Wednesday started selling apples grown in Nagano Prefecture that were bruised by bad weather.

Generally, 20-30% of vegetables are not up to scratch, with most being tossed out. In the wake of inclement weather, including torrential downpours, vegetable prices are skyrocketing.

Tokyu Store Chain Co., which is selling flawed vegetables on a trial basis, says it hopes such produce will be sold via regular sales channels. And according to Dynac Corp., a Japanese-style pub subsidiary of Suntory Holdings Ltd., "The range and amount of blemished vegetables is on the rise and it is now easy to purchase them for use as ingredients."

Meanwhile, food processing group Hayashikane Sangyo Co. buys unused fish caught in the fishing port of Shimonoseki and sells them to a nearby firm for making fish sausages. Fish that cannot be sold are returned to the sea to help invigorate the finishing industry, the group explains.

And Nitori Co. is enjoying brisk online demand for furniture scratched during transport, as well as for discontinued offerings. Prices are discounted 30-50%.

(The Nikkei Aug. 27 morning edition)

Industry/Market – Australia

Monday, 24 August 24, 2009

Mitsui Takes 33% Stake In Australian Carbon Consultancy

Trading house Mitsui & Co. said Monday that it has invested 440 million yen in Perenia Pty. Ltd., an Australian consultancy specializing in energy and the environment, acquiring a 33% stake.

Founded last year, Sydney-based Perenia provides comprehensive services, including calculating carbon dioxide emissions and brokering carbon credits. Its operations extend beyond Australia to South America, Southeast Asia and elsewhere. Mitsui says these areas complement those where it wants to expand its environment-related businesses.

Australia is toughening its environmental regulations. The government plans to introduce a cap-and-trade system to restrict greenhouse gas emissions. Mitsui aims to meet the demand from Japanese firms in Australia trying to comply with these changes.

(The Nikkei Aug. 25 morning edition)

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