



## **Media Report for The Tasmanian Department of Economic Development and Tourism 6 - 12 December 2008**

*Politics/Economy/Social*

Sunday 7 December, 2008

### **Approval Rating For Aso's Cabinet Falls**

The approval rating for Prime Minister Taro Aso's Cabinet plunged to 25.5 percent as of this weekend, below the 30 percent line into the level considered "critical" in terms of survival, and down 15.4 percentage points from the previous poll in November, according to a Kyodo News survey released Sunday.

The disapproval rating rose to 61.3 percent, up 19.1 points, with 55.7 percent of the respondents saying the Cabinet's postponement of submitting a second extra budget to the Diet was inappropriate.

It is generally believed that a Cabinet will face difficulties in remaining in power when the public support rating falls below the 30 percent threshold.

Respondents also gave higher marks to Ichiro Ozawa, president of the main opposition Democratic Party of Japan, than to Aso, though marginally, when asked which one they would prefer to see as leader of the nation.

Ozawa received 34.5 percent, up 10.1 points from the previous poll, while Aso got 33.5 percent, down 17.5 points. It was the first reversal for the two in terms of people's preferences since Aso, who also heads the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, became prime minister in September.

(Summary from Nikkei Net Interactive)

## *Industry/Market – Australia*

Monday 8 December, 2008

### **Sapporo Produces Special Beer Using Australian Malt**

Sapporo Breweries will release a new beer called “Sapporo The Golden Pilsner” on 15 December. The beer uses only specially selected Australian malt. Limited volumes will be sold only at the Aeon group retail outlets (approx. 1,500 outlets).

Sapporo places importance on food safety and environmental protection and following their company standards, have chosen to use malt from Joe White Maltings in Australia which received No. 1 ranking in 2007.

(Summary translation from Nikkei News Bulletin)

## *Industry/Market/Trends – Japan*

Saturday 6 December, 2008

### **Mitsubishi Corporation to Become Aeon's Top Shareholder Via 5% Stake**

Mitsubishi Corporation is set to acquire a roughly 5% stake in Aeon at an estimated cost of more than 30 billion yen, becoming the retailer's biggest shareholder.

Japan's largest general trading house and second-largest retailer will partner in such areas as product procurement and overseas operations.

Mitsubishi is in the process of buying Aeon shares on the market and is expected to announce the tie-up soon. Its stake in Aeon will surpass the 3% held by Mizuho Corporate Bank, which is effectively the current top shareholder.

The two companies are expected to consider manufacturing apparel at low cost in China and other parts of Asia. With consumers increasingly concerned about food safety, they will also look into jointly purchasing safe farm produce at home and abroad.

Mitsubishi will also offer support to Aeon in opening stores in China and elsewhere. In addition, the partners will consider collaboration in the convenience store business, such as joint procurement between Aeon subsidiary Ministop and Lawson, which is 32%-owned by Mitsubishi.

(Summary translation from Nihon Keizai Shimbun morning edition, Page 1)

Wednesday 10 December, 2008

## **McDonald's Japan Lifts November Sales by 14%**

McDonald's Holdings reported on 9 December that same-store sales grew by 14.4% on the year in November, marking a seventh straight month of increases and the strongest gain so far this year.

McDonald's teamed with Coca-Cola (Japan) to give free glasses to customers ordering pricier meals, buoying sales of such combo sets. Price hikes implemented in late August took hold, and the average guest spending rose 11.6%.

New product releases also helped increase customer traffic by 2.5%. Sales at all locations, including those that opened within the preceding year, climbed 16%.

Last year, McDonald's Japan enjoyed robust demand thanks to the huge popularity of its 'mega' burgers and round-the-clock service at more stores, and posted many months of double-digit growth in same-store sales. They have been losing the momentum this year, but the company is still outperforming most others in the restaurant industry, which is suffering from a general slump.

(Summary translation from Nihon Keizai Shimbun morning edition)

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