



Media Report for The Tasmanian Department of Economic Development and Tourism 27 September – 3 October 2008

Politics/Economy/Social

Monday 29 September, 2008

Japan Agrees on Concluding FTAs with Vietnam and Switzerland

Japan has struck separate basic deals with Vietnam and Switzerland to conclude bilateral free trade agreements after more than one year of negotiations, government officials said on 29 September.

Japan has found common ground on most issues regarding how to liberalize trade with Vietnam and Switzerland, Chief Cabinet Secretary Takeo Kawamura said at a news conference.

After the accord comes into effect, about 92 percent of Japan-Vietnam bilateral trade in value will be duty-free in 10 years. With Switzerland, tariffs on about 99 percent of the total value of bilateral trade will be eliminated in 10 years.

The two agreements will come into effect as early as next year.

For Vietnam, this will be the first bilateral free trade agreement, according to the officials.

In the course of the negotiations, Japan mainly called on Vietnam and Switzerland to scrap or cut import tariffs on industrial goods, including automobiles, auto parts and high-tech products. Vietnam, the largest exporter of shrimps to Japan, was calling for duty-free market access to clothing, seafood and farm products.

The economic partnership agreements will also cover cooperation in investment and services, in addition to trade in goods.

(Summary from Nikkei Net Interactive)

Wednesday 1 October, 2008

Aso, Ozawa Stress Ability to Run Govt in 1st Diet Debate

Prime Minister Taro Aso and main opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DJP) President Ichiro Ozawa both stressed their parties' ability to hold the reins of government in their first Diet debate on 1 October amid widespread expectations a general election will be called soon.

Countering Aso's policy speech delivered Monday, Ozawa gave his own "policy speech" at the Diet and urged the premier to promptly call a general election after sufficient debate is held in parliament over the course of the nation and presenting each party's policies. On dissolving the House of Representatives, Aso merely said, "I will make a decision on the dissolution."

(Summary from Nikkei Net Interactive)

Industry/Market – Australia

Wednesday 1 October, 2008

Renewal of SNS Specialising in Australia

"G'dayMate!", a social networking service (SNS) specialising in Australia re-opened on 1 October, with new functions and allowing easier access by general public. By encouraging general users, companies and organisations to exchange information, the site aims to strengthen relationship between the two countries, not just in tourism and study abroad markets but in many other areas.

<http://gdaymate.jp/>

(Summary translation from Travel Vision website

<http://www.travelvision.jp/modules/news1/article.php?storyid=38256>)

Industry/Market/Trends – Japan

Monday 29 September, 2008

Seiyu to Close 20 Stores and Cut 350 Jobs

Struggling supermarket chain operator Seiyu will by next year close more than 20 outlets, about 5% of its total, and cut roughly 350 jobs through early retirement as part of a restructuring program led by Wal-Mart Stores of the U.S.

The company suffered its sixth-straight net loss for the year ended December 2007, and same-store sales have been weak this year amid weak consumer spending. Wal-Mart made Seiyu a wholly owned unit in June.

(Summary translation from Nihon Keizai Shimbun evening edition)

Wednesday 1 October, 2008

Gateway 21 Goes Bankrupt

Major study abroad agent, Gateway 21, filed for bankruptcy. It was learned on 30 September that the number of creditors who have made pre-payment to the company, totalling 950 billion yen, amounts to approximately 2,500 people. However, it seems unlikely that they will be able to receive any refund.

(Summary translation from Mainichi Shimbun morning edition, Page 29)

Friday 3 October, 2008

Japan Wind Power Firms Increasing European Presence

Japanese wind power generation companies are expanding operations in Europe to take advantage of abundant windy locations and various alternative energy promotion measures. Eurus Energy Holdings plans to roughly triple the output capacity of its Welsh wind farm joint venture with Scottish Power from 30,900kw to about 90,000kw by around 2012 through expanding the site by 30% and installing larger wind turbines.

The leading Japanese wind power company, which is 60% owned by Tokyo Electric Power Company and 40% by Toyota Tsusho, estimates that the expansion will cost around 20 billion yen. The necessary funds are expected to be raised via project financing. Eurus Energy plans to also boost the power output capacity of another wind farm in Wales and to build a large-scale offshore wind farm off the west coast of central England.

Electric Power Development Co., or J-Power, began operating a 48,000kw wind farm in Poland last month. The second-ranked Japanese wind power firm intends to expand operations in Central and Eastern Europe because those regions still have a relatively large number of locations ideal for setting up wind farms.

Japan Wind Development Company plans to set up two wind farms in Scotland. The third-biggest Japanese wind power company aims to start building a 6,000kw facility by next year, then later add another with a 25,000kw capacity. It is also considering building wind farms in the Czech Republic and other East European countries in the future.

The European Union has set a goal of raising the proportion of power generated from renewable energy sources from around 8% today to 20% by 2020. In an effort to realize this goal, EU member countries have implemented various preferential measures.

(Summary translation from Nihon Keizai Shimbun morning edition)

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