

MARINE SAFETY NEWS

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

Cheerfulness is the very flower of health. - Japanese Proverb

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Azumi To Press EU On Debt Fears At G20

TOKYO - Finance Minister Jun Azumi said on Tuesday that he would press Europe to take action to deal with the continent's debt crisis at this week's meeting of finance officials from the Group of 20 (G20) nations.

"A more stable situation in Europe would stop the yen's uptrend and lead to stable growth in the Japanese economy," Azumi said at a news conference.

Azumi will attend the G20 meeting later this week in Paris.

Azumi welcomed a pledge made French President Nicolas Sarkozy and German Chancellor Angela Merkel during the weekend to find a solid plan to address the eurozone crisis. But Azumi added: "Primarily, I would like Europe to talk about what scheme,

including an increase in fund injections, it is going to go ahead with."

Azumi also said that if European leaders come up with a new scheme for dealing with the debt crisis, Japan will consult with the United States on additional support the two countries could provide.

The safe haven yen has surged as investors flee market volatility amid increasing fears for the global economy, with little progress seen in resolving the eurozone crisis and indications of a United States economic slowdown.

Japan has invested large sums in bonds issued by the European Financial Stability Facility - around JPY278.32 billion, or 20% of the total amount raised by the first three issues launched by the fund this year. (AFP)

August Current Account Surplus Falls 64.3%

TOKYO - The country's current account surplus shrank 64.3% year-on-year in August, the sixth-straight monthly fall as higher energy import costs overshadowed a small gain in exports, data showed on Tuesday.

Higher oil prices and an increase in liquefied natural gas imports by utilities to compensate for the shutdown of atomic reactors after the March Fukushima crisis helped push Japan's trade balance into a deficit.

The surplus in the current account, the broadest measure of the nation's trade with the rest of the world, stood at JPY407.5 billion in August before seasonal adjustment, Finance Ministry data showed.

The result, the sixth consecutive drop in the aftermath of the March twin disasters, was lower than expectations of a JPY446.9-billion surplus in a survey of economists by Dow Jones Newswires and the Nikkei.

Exports rose four percent in August on-year, the first gain since the March 11 earthquake and tsunami. But imports jumped 22.4%, partly due to higher oil prices and Japan's increased need for fossil fuels.

In August, Japan saw a trade deficit of JPY694.7 billion, from a surplus of JPY170.6 billion a year earlier. Analysts warn the current account surplus is expected to continue to decline as Japan's recovery from recession may slow amid concerns about the health of the global economy and the impact of a strong yen on the nation's exporters. (AFP)

Stocks Gain As Europe, China Shore Up Banks

BANGKOK - Asian stocks surged Tuesday as a pledge by European leaders to protect the region's banks from a debt crisis and Beijing's move to buy the shares of major Chinese lenders boosted confidence. Oil prices hovered above USD85 a barrel while the dollar strengthened against the euro and the yen. The Nikkei was two percent higher at 8,780.25.

South Korea's Kospi rose 1.6% to 1,794.62, and Australia's S&P/ASX 200 added 0.4% to 4,219.10.

A pause in the yen's appreciation against the euro helped export shares, Kyodo news agency reported, citing stock traders.

Honda Motor Corp jumped six percent while electronics giants Sony and Sharp each rose more than five percent.

China's Shanghai Composite Index rose 0.7% to 2,361.58 a day after a government investment fund announced it had bought shares in major banks, helping to bolster the country's sagging stock market.

Benchmarks in Taiwan, Singapore, Indonesia and Thailand were all higher by two percent or more.

China's four biggest state banks soared after Central Huijin Investment Ltd, an arm of the sovereign wealth fund China Investment Corp, said late Monday that it bought shares in the Industrial & Commercial Bank of China, Agricultural Bank of China, Bank of China and China Construction Bank and that it would continue its market-support operations. It did not say how many shares it had purchased.

Stock markets worldwide were also rejuvenated by signs that Europe is preparing serious steps to provide banks with the capital cushions necessary to withstand a possible debt default by Greece.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Nicolas Sarkozy said Sunday that they would finalize a comprehensive response to the debt crisis by the end of the month. (AP)

NTT Com Enters Laos

TOKYO - NTT Communications Corporation (NTT Com) announced on October 11 that its subsidiary NTT Communications (Thailand) Co Ltd has begun operating a branch office in Laos, named the NTT Communications Vientiane Representative Office.

The new office initially is advising multinational companies on the use of efficient and reliable ICT solutions for production, retail and sales operations in Laos.

It also is providing useful business-related information. Eventually, the office will offer its own high-quality solutions in collaboration with local carriers and the Laotian government, after receiving the necessary licensing.

Headed by Tsuyoshi Kawashima, concurrently president of NTT Communications (Thailand) and the Phnom Penh Branch manager, this is the first branch to be launched in Laos by a Japanese carrier.

Global manufacturers are increasingly looking to Laos as a new production base due to its low electricity and labor costs. The country's economy is supported by the East-West Economic corridor linking Vietnam, Laos, Thailand and Myanmar, and also the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway linking Thailand, Laos, Myanmar and China's Yunnan Province. (PNA)

Jacksons To Stage December Charity Concert

TOKYO - Three of Michael Jackson's siblings will be performing at the National Yoyogi Stadium in December for the Japan leg of their Michael Jackson Tribute Live. Jackie, Tito and Marlon Jackson will reportedly be performing on December 13 and 14.

"If Michael was alive, he would definitely have done something to help the victims of the earthquake in Japan," Michael's mother, Katherine, said in London yesterday.

"Michael loved children, he would have felt for those children who lost parents or homes."

Local artists will make a special appearance in the shows, with AI singing her song to the King of Pop, "Letter in the Sky."

Judith Hill, Kento Mori and Travis Payne will also join the concerts. The Jacksons will reportedly donate part of the proceeds of the concert to ASHINAGA, a Tokyo-based group that gives financial and emotional assistance to children orphaned by the March 11 earthquake and tsunami. Tickets will be available starting tomorrow.

MARINE NEWS SUMMARY

CONTAINER VESSELS: NEXT-GENERATION WILL BE LARGEST EVER

If the need is for greater efficiency for road and rail freight during an economic slowdown, standard operating procedures might be to downgrade to smaller and lighter means of overland transport. Shipping lines, however, have a different approach: they build bigger ships. The reason, they say, is better economies of scale, costing them less to send a string of three or four huge new ships across the oceans instead of a larger fleet of smaller vessels. These bigger and newer ships will also have more efficient engines and lower emissions, which also means lower fuel costs, as the company hopes an everlasting impression on its customers. One shipping giant is reportedly spending USD 1.9 billion on 10 new ships, each of which will carry 18,000 TEUs. The new Ultra Large Container Ships (ULCS) will be more than 1,312 feet long and more than 193 feet wide, and will outdo cargo capacity of the world's largest container vessel currently afloat, by 16%. The company's chief executive said that building ULCSs was not only a top priority for the firm but also for its customers, who are heavily dependent upon this in their supply chain. Five years ago, the world's largest container ship had a TEU capacity of 9,500. According to a Paris-based maritime research firm, the container carriers' answer to challenges of sustainable shipping and reduction of emissions is to build ever-larger ships, whose sizes have doubled over a decade.

"The abolition of the death penalty has become an unshakable international trend, and now is the time to launch a social debate about its termination," the declaration added.

The JFBA stressed that capital punishment risks the miscarriage of justice, especially when a person is convicted by mistake.

Amnesty International Japan executive director Hideki Wakabayashi added that besides pushing for an end to death penalty, JFBA also wants the government to develop a program that will help criminals reintegrate to mainstream society, noting that some crimes were committed due to financial difficulties.

AI says that 139 countries abolished the death penalty by the end of 2010. Japan had been urged by the Geneva-based Human Rights Committee to "favorably consider abolishing the death penalty and inform the public, as necessary, about the desirability of abolition."

Ex-PM Kan Resumes Buddhist Temple Pilgrimage

IMABARI - Former Prime Minister Naoto Kan has decided to continue his pilgrimage of Buddhist sites in Shikoku-chiho starting with the Enmeiji Temple in Ehime-ken on October 3. Kan wore a light white top and khaki pants plus a straw hat on which is written "Kobo Daishi (Buddhist monk) is always with me."

The temple in Imabari-shi is No 54 in the pilgrimage that has a total of 88 sites.

He was also able to visit Nankobo temple on the same day.

He is accompanied by security personnel. The former premier did not give anyone the details of his otherwise personal trip, the "Mainichi Shimbun" said. Kan began his pilgrimage of the temples in July 2004. His last stop before assuming the post of prime minister was the Enmyoji temple, 53rd in the route, in July 2008.

Shinko Zaidan To Give Up Chugoku Electric Shares

YAMAGUCHI - Yamaguchi-ken's Shinko Zaidan will sell half of its shares in the Chugoku Electric Power Co ahead of its dissolution next year. Shinko, a foundation of the prefectural government, has so far been Chugoku Electric's largest shareholder.

The prefectural government will reportedly take over the remaining shares as part of measures to raise local funds.

Sources said that the Yamaguchi Financial Group Inc, Mizuho Corporate Bank and Hiroshima Bank are among the entities that plan to buy the 27.5 million shares that will be put on sale. The buyer will be selected at the end of the month.

REGIONAL NEWS

Chugoku/Shikoku in Focus

News from around Chugoku/Shikoku over the past seven days. (In tomorrow's issue: Chubu)

Bar Association Pushes For End To Death Penalty

TAKAMATSU - The abolition of the death penalty in the country became the focus of the Japan Federation of Bar Associations' two-day human rights meeting in Takamatsu-shi, Kanagawa-ken, ahead of yesterday's World Day Against the Death Penalty that was observed worldwide.

"The death penalty is an inhumane punishment as it claims precious life, and it robs those convicted of the potential to rehabilitate," the federation said in a statement.

Miyagi Edo-Era House To Find New 'Home'

MINAMISANRIKU - A three-century old thatched house that survived the earthquake and tsunami will be transported to Takamatsu-shi, Kagawa-ken, to become a folk-house museum. The house, owned by sericulturist Shigeyuki Endo, has withstood the tide of time in Minamisanriku-cho, Miyagi-ken, through regular rethatching.

It was built in 1702, in the middle of the Edo period.

The structure will be transferred to Takamatsu-shi's Shikoku-mura where many other folk houses have been relocated and refurbished.

"We want to keep the house permanently and will look for opportunities to make use of it, such as when artists make presentations," said a museum official in charge of the project. The relocation is slated for next year.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Putin Arrives In China After USD7 Billion Deals

BEIJING - Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin arrived in Beijing on Tuesday for talks with Chinese leaders, a day after his gas-rich nation signed deals worth over USD7 billion with the world's top energy consumer.

Putin is due to meet his Chinese counterpart, Wen Jiabao, and President Hu Jintao on his two-day visit - his first abroad since he announced plans last month to reclaim the Russian presidency.

China's Foreign Ministry said on Tuesday that the two countries had already signed 16 economic and trade agreements worth more than USD7 billion "in the fields of technology transfer, research and development and mineral development."

It gave no further details of the deals, which were signed at a summit on Monday, held ahead of Putin's visit.

Observers said that the Russian prime minister may lay out his foreign policy priorities for years to come during the trip. Russia is the world's largest energy producer and its plans to pump gas to China are expected to top discussions, although Chinese state media played down the prospect of any breakthrough on a long-delayed deal. (AFP)

Angela Merkel Leaves Crisis-Hit Eurozone For Asia

HANOI - German Chancellor Angela Merkel arrived in Vietnam on Tuesday, leaving behind the debt crisis raging in the eurozone to push a free trade deal and press the communist nation on human rights.

The trip, which will also take her to Mongolia, comes shortly after Merkel vowed with French President Nicolas Sarkozy a response within weeks to the economic storm which has raised fears for Europe's banking sector.

Ahead of the four-day visit, Merkel, who is accompanied by top business leaders eyeing investment opportunities, stressed the need to boost ties between the two fast-growing Asian nations and Europe's top economy.

"Vietnam is an emerging country in Asia, has enjoyed fast-paced economic growth in recent years and is increasingly becoming a competitor for large nations like China," Merkel said in her regular weekend podcast.

A senior government source in Berlin said Merkel would push a free-trade accord between the European Union and Vietnam, adding that Germany "is a very strong supporter" of such a deal.

The European Union announced in March last year that it would start negotiating a free trade pact with Vietnam. Germany is the Asian nation's largest trade partner in Europe, buying Vietnamese exports worth USD1.8 billion in the first seven months of this year, against imports of USD1.1 billion, the Vietnam News Agency reported. (AFP)

Fresh Oil Spills In NZ's Worst Sea Pollution Disaster

TAURANGA - New Zealand on Tuesday declared its worst maritime pollution disaster, as oil gushed into a pristine bay from a stranded container ship which was being pounded in heavy seas.

The crippled container vessel Rena, which hit a reef off the North Island coast on October 5, leaked up to 350 tonnes of heavy fuel after being further damaged in the storm, dwarfing an initial spill, maritime authorities said.

"I'd like to acknowledge this event has come to a stage where it is New Zealand's most significant maritime environmental disaster," Environment Minister Nick Smith told reporters at Tauranga.

Smith said there was little authorities could have done to prevent the disaster in the environmentally sensitive Bay of Plenty, where beaches have already been fouled with oil and some wildlife found dead or contaminated.

"It is my view that the tragic events we are seeing unfolding were absolutely inevitable from the point that the Rena ran onto the reef in the early hours of Wednesday morning," he said. The latest spill was much larger than an initial leak of 20 tonnes after the Liberian-flagged vessel ploughed into the reef, 22 kilometres offshore. (AFP)

Apple Says Pre-Orders Of iPhone 4S Break Record

NEW YORK - Apple said that the first-day pre-orders of the iPhone 4S topped one million, breaking the record set by last year's model. Apple Inc and various phone companies in the United States, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Japan and Britain started taking orders for the phone last Friday. It hits stores this Friday.

FINANCIAL NEWS

FOREIGN EXCHANGE

USD 1 = JPY 76.69-70 (as of 4:40pm)

Bank of Japan

The base model of the iPhone 4S costs USD200 with a two-year contract.

It has a faster processor and an improved camera compared to last year's model.

However, some customers and investors were disappointed that Apple did not launch a more radical new model.

It's been more than a year since Apple since the previous model was released.

Despite the record-breaking pace of iPhone 4S pre-orders, it is hard to determine whether consumer demand is stronger for the new device than it was for previous versions.

Although first-day orders for the iPhone4 were 600,000 when it launched last year, Australia and Canada weren't among the launch countries then - they got the phone a month later. Apple has also expanded the number of carriers in each country that sell the phone. (AP)

Pop Sensation Rain Joins South Korean Army

UIJEONGBU - South Korean pop star Rain is temporarily giving up his entertainment career to join the military. The 29-year-old singer and actor gave a military salute to tearful fans on Tuesday before walking into a boot camp in the city of Uijeongbu north of Seoul.

Many of the hundreds of fans gathered in front of the base were from Japan and China.

All able-bodied South Korean men are required to serve two to three years in the military, a legacy of the Korean War of the 1950s. Rain isn't expected to receive any special treatment during his time in the army. Rain's real name is Jung Ji-hoon. He is one of Asia's most popular stars. He made his Hollywood film debut in "Speed Racer" in 2008. (AP)

SPORTS NEWS

MLB - Cruz Hits Grand Slam; Texas Beats Tigers

Texas Rangers 7 - Detroit Tigers 3: The Texas Rangers are on Cruz control in the AL championship series. Nelson Cruz hit the first game-ending grand slam in postseason history, lifting the defending American League champions over the Detroit Tigers in 11 innings on Monday for a 2-0 series lead.

Cruz doubled early, chased Tigers starter Max Scherzer with a tying home run in the seventh and was hit by a fastball near his right wrist that sent him crumpling to the ground in pain in the ninth.

 WEATHER

Tokyo: 17-23c Cloudy
Sapporo: 6-14c Cloudy
Fukuoka: 17-25c Thunderstorms
Oki nawa: 23-28c Thunderstorms

Then, with nobody out in the 11th after a misplay in the Detroit outfield loaded the bases, Cruz hit a high drive to left off Ryan Perry that sent 51,227 fans into a towel-waving frenzy.

Cruz's trip around the bases ended with him getting mobbed at the plate by the Rangers. Game 3 is Tuesday night in Detroit. Colby Lewis, 4-0 in five career postseason starts, pitches for Texas against Doug Fister. (AP) **Other Result: (National League Playoff)** Milwaukee Brewers 3-12 St Louis Cardinals.

NPB Results

Central League: Yomiuri Giants 3-6 Hanshin Tigers, Chunichi Dragons 3-0 Yakult Swallows, Hiroshima Carp 0-3 Yokohama BayStars;
Pacific League: Nippon Ham Fighters 0-12 Seibu Lions, Rakuten Eagles 6-1 Lotte Marines, Softbank Hawks 9-2 Orix Buffaloes.

2014 WC Qualifying - Samurais To 'Create Opportunities'

Japan Vs Tajikistan: Coach Alberto Zaccheroni admitted that the Blue Samurais are up for a tough fight against Tajikistan tonight but stressed that the team must continue to focus on "creating opportunities" in the World Cup qualifying match to be held in Nagai Stadium.

"It's true we have only managed one goal in each of the last three games but we created more chances than we ever have before against North Korea and had chances against Uzbekistan ... If the number of chances we make were less than the number of goals we score then it would be a concern. If we had made hardly any chances in my 15 games in charge it would certainly be a worry. I think we are just missing that little bit of accuracy in front of goal. We had a couple of dubious offside decisions go against us against Vietnam, but on the other hand we took our chances against South Korea. The important thing is to create opportunities. Sometimes you take them and sometimes you don't," the Italian coach said.

The Samurais lost in its previous Group C game against Uzbekistan at home and barely won against North Korea in an earlier match.

Captain Makoto Hasebe described Tajikistan as "physically strong" but weak in skill and organization.

"The most important thing is to win, but if we can win 5-0 then that would be the best way to improve the atmosphere within the team," the VfL Wolfsburg midfielder said.

Other Matches: North Korea Vs Uzbekistan, Australia Vs Oman, South Korea Vs United Arab Emirates, Thailand Vs Saudi Arabia, Singapore Vs Jordan, Indonesia Vs Qatar, China Vs Iraq, Lebanon Vs Kuwait, Iran Vs Bahrain.

Emperor's Cup Results

Vissel Kobe 8-0 Sanyo Denki Sumoto, Gainare Tottori 3-0 Roasso Kumamoto, Oita Trinita 1-0 Tokushima Vortis, Kyoto Sanga FC 3-0 Sagawa Printing, JEF United Ichihara Chiba 1-0 Dezzolla Shimane, Tokyo Verdy 7-1 V-Varen Nagasaki, Omiya Ardija 1-1 Fukuoka University, FC Gifu 0-1 Giravanz Kitakyushu, Kataller Toyama 3-3 Sagan Tosu.

AFC U-19 Women's Championship Results

Australia 0-1 Japan, China 1-1 South Korea, Vietnam 0-5 North Korea.

Beckenbauer Tips Platini For Top FIFA Job

BERLIN - German football legend Franz Beckenbauer on Monday tipped UEFA chief Michel Platini to succeed Sepp Blatter as the next president of world football governing body FIFA.

In an interview with sporting magazine "Kicker," Beckenbauer hailed "the super work" being carried out by Platini as UEFA president where the Frenchman "makes a great effort and gets his ideas across."

"I think he'll (Platini) be the next FIFA president. Sepp Blatter will finish by no longer being a candidate because of his age," Beckenbauer said.

Blatter, 75, was reelected for a fourth four-year term in June.

Beckenbauer added that he was very concerned by the Financial Fair-Play project adopted by UEFA last May, designed to crack down on debt-laden clubs. The initiative aims to prevent clubs from spending more than they generate to play in European competition and will progressively come into force with the first sanctions from 2014-2015. (AFP)

Andy Roddick Survives Shanghai Scare

SHANGHAI - A frustrated Andy Roddick dug deep to beat Taiwan's Lu Yen-hsun, 6-2 3-6 6-2, at the Shanghai Masters on Monday and avoid a second ignominious first-round exit in a week in China. The American tenth seed started the match in blistering form, breaking twice and racing into a 4-0 lead, taking the first set 6-2. But the Taiwanese world No 74 hit back strongly in the second set, striking a stunning two-handed backhand down the line to force a break for a 3-1 lead, which proved enough to level the match against an erratic Roddick.

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Clearly unsettled, the American voiced his frustration at noise and movement in the sparse crowd and at a ball-boy, but he refocused and crucially broke in the fourth game of the decider.

Roddick, ousted from the first round of the Beijing Open by South Africa's Kevin Anderson last week, kept his grip as the Lu challenge faded, breaking again to seal the match in a little under two hours. (AFP)

2nd Seeded Bartoli In 2nd Round At Japan Open

OSAKA - Second-seeded Marion Bartoli reached the second round of the Japan Open by beating Melinda Cink of Hungary, 6-2 6-2, on Monday. Seventh-seeded Chanelle Scheepers of South Africa also advanced, beating Alla Kudryavtseva of Russia, 6-2 6-2. But eighth-seeded Christina McHale of the United States was eliminated by Thai veteran Tamarine Tanasugarn, 6-3 7-5.

Also, Misaki Doi of Japan beat CoCo Vandeweghe of the United States, 6-4 6-4, Eleni Daniilidou of Greece defeated Anastasia Pivovarova of Russia, 6-2 6-2, and Mathilde Johansson of France beat Irina Falconi of the United States, 6-3 6-2. (AP)

Japan Beats China In Men's Gymnastics Qualifying

TOKYO - World and Olympic men's team gymnastics champions China dropped to a surprise third place in qualifying at the world gymnastics championships in Tokyo on Monday as hosts Japan took first place.

Japan - who have not won a world team gold in 33 years - came top with 364.291 points, ahead of the United States on 361.583 and China, who performed on Monday, back on 359.126.

Japan were led by Kohei Uchimura, seeking an unprecedented third straight all-around title, and who battled against a fear of recurring leg cramps to power his team into the lead on the first day of qualifying on Sunday. (AFP)