

## JAPANESE INDUSTRY AND POLICY NEWS

August 2016

### LEGISLATION AND POLICY NEWS

#### **2016 White Paper on Information and Communications Features IoT, Big Data and AI**

The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications released its 44<sup>th</sup> annual report on the current status of information and communications (White Paper on Information and Communications in Japan) on 29 July.

The White Paper features “Internet of Things (IoT), Big Data and Artificial Intelligent (AI): New Values Created by Networks and Data” and prospects the progress of new ICT will bring.

[http://www.soumu.go.jp/main\\_sosiki/joho\\_tsusin/eng/Releases/Telecommunications/160729\\_03.html](http://www.soumu.go.jp/main_sosiki/joho_tsusin/eng/Releases/Telecommunications/160729_03.html)

[http://www.soumu.go.jp/main\\_content/000436490.pdf](http://www.soumu.go.jp/main_content/000436490.pdf)

#### **Outstanding IoT-based Projects Selected**

On 31 July, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) and the IoT Acceleration Lab held an IoT Lab Selection event, in which outstanding Internet of Things (IoT)-based projects are selected, and the winners of the Grand Prix, Semi Grand Prix, and Examiners' Special Award were recognized.

The IoT Acceleration Lab was established to select and cultivate advanced IoT projects, provide those projects with comprehensive financial and regulatory support and ensure collaboration with enterprises and develop the environments in which the results of the projects can be implemented on a large scale through additional regulatory reforms or the creation of new systems.

The IoT Acceleration Lab recognized the winners of the Grand Prix, Semi Grand Prix, and Examiners' Special Award as follows.

Grand Prix Winner: UniFa Corporation

Project: Supporting the digitalization of services for monitoring the premises of nursery schools

Semi Grand Prix Winner: Phoenix Solution Co., Ltd.

Project: World's-first RFID tag that is readable even through the metal to which

it is attached

Semi Grand Prix Winner: Zenrin Co., Ltd.

Project: Demonstration project concerning information on three-dimensional aerial maps toward the realization of safe drone flight over city areas

Examiners' Special Award Winner: exMedio Inc.

Project: Technology for recognizing ophthalmic disorders using images and data from medical interviews

[http://www.meti.go.jp/english/press/2016/0801\\_03.html](http://www.meti.go.jp/english/press/2016/0801_03.html)

<https://unifa-e.com/> (Japanese language only)

<http://www.phoenix-sol.co.jp/english/index.html>

<http://www.zenrin.co.jp/english/index.html>

<https://exmed.io/> (Japanese language only)

### **Action Plan for Industry-Academia-Government Initiatives on HRD in Science and Technology Compiled**

The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) jointly established an Industry-Academia-Government Collaborative Roundtable on Human Resources Development in Science and Technology. METI announces the results of the discussion as a report titled “Action Plan for Industry-Academia-Government Collaborative Initiatives on Human Resources Development in Science and Technology”.

The Action Plan includes (1) Initiatives for matching industry's need for human resources with the higher education curriculum, and improving professional education, (2) Measures for promoting the empowerment of postdoctoral personnel in industry and (3) Expanding the future basis for human resources in the fields of science and technology will be fostered, and enhancing the curriculum of elementary and secondary education.

METI and MEXT will raise awareness of stakeholders by enhancing the effectiveness of the action plan. In addition, they will review and amend the action plan every fiscal year to draw public attention to the progress of the initiatives in the plan, monitor progress during the roundtable meetings and revise the plan if necessary based on those observations.

[http://www.meti.go.jp/english/press/2016/0802\\_01.html](http://www.meti.go.jp/english/press/2016/0802_01.html)

### **Winners of the Second FY2016 Demonstration Project for the Introduction of Robots Announced**

The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) examined the applicants for the second call for the FY2016 Demonstration Project for the Introduction of Robots and decided to adopt 104 projects proposed by applicants for the utilization of robots in new areas concerning the eight categories of proposals: 83 for demonstrations of robot introduction and 21 for feasibility studies (FS). The Demonstration Project for the Introduction of Robots is an initiative for advancing demonstrations and tests for introducing robots into frontier fields where robots are not yet utilized, in the areas of monodzukuri and services, toward the realization of a society in which robots are utilized in the broad fields stated in the strategy.

[http://www.meti.go.jp/english/press/2016/0805\\_01.html](http://www.meti.go.jp/english/press/2016/0805_01.html)

### **Operation of the “Omotenashi Standard Certification” System to Start**

Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) decided to establish a new standardization system titled “Omotenashi [hospitality] Standard Certification”. It started accepting applications for the Omotenashi Standard Certification 2016 program on 25 August.

In the Omotenashi Standard Certification 2016 program, when applicants satisfy at least 15 requirements out of the 30 total registered requirements (the criteria for measuring the efforts of service providers in making the quality of their services visible to customers) METI will register the applicant service providers. After registering applicants, METI will issue a certificate and an “Omotenashi Standard Certification 2016” sign to the applicants. After having printed out the certificate and sign, the registered service providers are allowed to display these in shops or offices to attract the attention of customers to the quality of their services and efforts.

[http://www.meti.go.jp/english/press/2016/0825\\_01.html](http://www.meti.go.jp/english/press/2016/0825_01.html)

## **SURVEY AND BUSINESS DATA**

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Biggest Current Account Surplus Registered in the First Half**

According to the balance of payments statistics that the Ministry of Finance published on 8 August, Japan's current account for the first 6 months of the year was a surplus of 10,625.6 billion yen, which is the second largest in history. The biggest surplus of 12,699.3 billion yen was registered in the first half of 2007. Goods trade balance turned to be positive due mainly to the decline of mineral fuel imports. Deficit in services trade diminished because travel balance registered a large surplus. Surplus in primary income became smaller due to reduced portfolio investment returns.

[http://www.mof.go.jp/international\\_policy/reference/balance\\_of\\_payments/preliminary/bpch2016.pdf](http://www.mof.go.jp/international_policy/reference/balance_of_payments/preliminary/bpch2016.pdf)

### **Bankruptcies Hit 26-year Low for July**

Tokyo Shoko Research Ltd., a credit research company announced on 8 August that the number of corporate bankruptcies in Japan fell in July to the lowest level for the month in 26 years, down 9.5 percent from a year earlier to 712. The figure marked the fifth straight month of decrease.

A major reason behind the sharp decline in July was that the number of business failures in the construction sector decreased on the back of reconstruction projects following the March 2011 quake-tsunami disaster. ICT sector also registered less failures.

<http://www.tsr-net.co.jp/news/status/monthly/201607.html> (Japanese language only)

## **COMPANY NEWS**

### **Panasonic Acquired a German Automobile Software Company**

Panasonic Corp. announced on 9 August that it acquired all shares of German automobile-related software company OpenSynergy GmbH, with an eye on bolstering its automotive business.

"OpenSynergy's software technologies enable multiple different operating systems to be integrated into one system. These technologies make it possible to realize a next-generation cockpit system where multimedia and driver support functions are integrated," Panasonic said in a press release.

The Osaka-based electronics maker said it would aim at supplying automobile manufacturers next-generation systems, such as a windshield information

display system.

<http://news.panasonic.com/global/press/data/2016/08/en160809-2/en160809-2.html>

## TOPICS

### **NHK Starts 4K, 8K High-definition Test Broadcasting**

Japan's public broadcasting station NHK started on 1 August test broadcasting of 4K and 8K ultra high-definition on its BS satellite channels, aiming to verify the technology and popularise it ahead of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics.

The resolution of 4K broadcasting is roughly four times as detailed as that of the currently available format while 8K broadcasting, which is making its world debut, offers 16 times finer resolution.

Viewers cannot watch 4K and 8K broadcasting with conventional television sets or tuners. NHK will place 8K televisions at its broadcasting centers nationwide for visitors to watch.

<http://www.nhk.or.jp/shv/> (Japanese language only)

<https://www.nhk.or.jp/strl/publica/rd/rd152/PDF/P30-39.pdf> (reference material)

### **Tourism Industry: *Disaster-hit Regions Count on "Pokémon Go" for the Recovery of Tourism***

Four prefectures in the northeast and southwest of Japan that were devastated by the earthquake and tsunami in 2011 or badly damaged by a major tremor in April this year are counting on the frenzy sparked by "Pokémon Go" to draw tourists to their regions.

Officials from Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima prefectures in the Tohoku region as well as Kumamoto prefecture in western Japan said on 10 August that they would use the popular augmented-reality game to encourage more people to visit their region in a bid to help their rebuilding efforts.

The four prefectures are planning to work closely with the Japanese unit of U.S. game developer Niantic Inc., hoping that more tourist destinations in their regions will serve as "Pokéstops" where players can collect items or "gyms" where they can battle their Pokémon, or virtual pocket monsters.

<http://www.pref.iwate.jp/governor/yotei/44426/048030.html> (Japanese language)

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