

# THE NEWS QUIZ

## HEADLINES

TV host bests own Guinness record

Narita guard held for terror threats

China registering Japan locations as trademarks

GSDF private fires rifle without authorization

## PICTURES



What are the stories behind these pictures?

## MISSING WORDS

Toshiba subcontractor hired  to inspect nuke plants

Diet officially declares  indigenous

Black watermelon fetches record ¥  in Hokkaido

#### Hospitals reused syringes on 10,000 patients

The dubious practice of reusing syringes and other blood-collection devices at many medical institutions is raising concerns that HIV, hepatitis and other viral diseases may be spreading. Reuse of the devices has been confirmed involving more than 10,000 people at nursing homes, nursing schools and medical institutions in at least 19 prefectures, sources said. While actual harm has not yet been reported, the finding has prompted the health ministry to investigate. In March 2006, the Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry issued a directive banning the practice in response to hepatitis infections caused by it in Britain. But the ministry was criticized for failing to fully disseminate the directive to medical institutions, and many hospitals were found to have reused blood-collecting devices in the belief that they are safe if sterilized. Many cases involve a small device used by diabetics to measure blood-sugar levels. Easy to use and less painful, the device has become popular at hospitals but was originally intended for home use. "It was unthinkable under normal circumstances," a Shimane prefectural official said, referring to a reuse case at a clinic in Masuda that surfaced May 21. The clinic used the same needles for at least 37 patients, including those infected with hepatitis B and C. "We had assumed that the device would automatically replace the needles," said the clinic's chief, Hiroshi Ochi. However, a seal on the device clearly states that it cannot be used on multiple patients.

#### Toshiba subcontractor hired teens to inspect nuke plants

SENDAI — Toshiba Corp. has said it has found that eight people below the age of 18 were illegally hired by a subcontractor to help inspect three nuclear plants and that six of them worked in restricted areas at risk of radiation exposure. The Tokyo-based electronics giant said in a news release dated Tuesday it suspects those who were engaged in hiring the eight may have forged documents to obtain permits to work in the restricted areas of the plants belonging to Tokyo Electric Power Co. and Tohoku Electric Power Co. Workers who face radiation exposure must be above 18, according to the Labor Standards Law. In addition, other special permits are required to work in restricted areas. The six teens had been performing support work, including transport of supplies at Tepco's No. 1 Fukushima power plant and Tohoku Electric's power stations in Miyagi and Aomori prefectures, during checkups since last October. The Fukushima plant had 8,208 people working in restricted areas in fiscal 2004, the Nuclear Safety Commission of Japan said. Of them, 923 were Toshiba employees and 7,285 subcontracted workers. The latter faced a higher radiation exposure risk than the former. Toshiba said it discovered the violation during a regular inspection and reported it to the local labor ministry branches and the power utilities. The ministry branches are investigating. Tepco spokesman Kiyoto Ishikawa said the utility is prepared to take any necessary steps after an investigation by Toshiba. Tohoku Electric spokesman Naoya Sasazaki said the company is considering preventive measures.

#### iPhone launch due by yearend as Softbank hooks up with Apple

Softbank Corp. said Wednesday it has reached a deal with Apple Inc. to launch iPhone sales in Japan by the end of the year, further boosting the prospects of the nation's scrappy No. 3 mobile phone company. Industry watchers were surprised by the decision because Apple usually selects the carrier with the biggest market share to sell the iPhone overseas. A spokesman for industry leader NTT DoCoMo Inc. declined comment on the deal. More details on the agreement, including launch dates, pricing and exclusivity, are not yet available, said Softbank spokesman Kenichi Yuasa. The deal is expected to give Softbank a competitive edge because of Apple's huge brand recognition. Apple has nurtured its image as a user-friendly, fashionable and cutting-edge product inventor with its Macintosh computers and iPod music players. But it is unclear how Apple's latest gadget will fare in the finicky Japanese market, where the iPhone was initially mocked for its high price and dated technology. A typical iPhone will not work in Japan, which has its own distinct cell phone network based on the faster third-generation network. But Apple is widely expected to announce a next-generation iPhone next week that can run on 3G networks. Globally, Apple hopes to sell 10 million iPhones by the end of 2008. It had sold some 5.4 million worldwide as of the end of March. The iPhone is basically a mobile phone that has the same features as an iPod music player. It boasts a full-scale Web browser in addition to a touch-activated screen with a virtual keyboard. The interface, which allows content to be dragged and dropped on screen by finger, has wowed many Japanese. But some analysts said the iPhone may not prove as popular in Japan because Japanese customers favor text messages as their main communication tool and may feel uncomfortable doing so on a touch screen. Apple, based in Cupertino, Calif., launched the iPhone in the United States and Europe last year and has signed deals with Asian networks in Singapore, India, the Philippines and Australia. The product releases in those countries are also scheduled to take place later this year. In the U.S., Apple is currently selling the iPhone for \$399 for the 8 GB model and \$499 for the 16 GB model.

#### Tokyo makes final round for Olympics

Tokyo has been picked as one of the four candidate cities to host the 2016 Summer Olympics, receiving the top rating in the preliminary selection round, the International Olympic Committee announced Thursday. The three others making it to the final round are Chicago, Madrid and Rio de Janeiro. Even though the IOC made the announcement in Athens at around 1 a.m. Japan time, about 40 people, including Tokyo Vice Gov. Kenji Tanigawa and Diet members, were on hand at the Tokyo Metropolitan Government building to hear and celebrate the news. Three other applicants — Prague, Baku and Doha — failed to get the IOC nod to move on to the final round. "This was expected," Gov. Shintaro Ishihara told a news conference later in the day, stressing that Tokyo has only gotten to the starting line. "The important thing is to focus on what we do from this point forward. It involves a whole range of efforts." Asked how he would describe where Tokyo would be if it were climbing a mountain, Ishihara said: "We've just gotten to the base. It's like trying to reach the clouds, but if we put all our efforts together, I think we can make it." While Tokyo finished at the top of the ratings in the preliminary phase, followed by Madrid and Chicago, these rankings won't be crucial in the final selection. The final bid plans have to be submitted by February. The IOC will name the winning city at a general assembly meeting in Copenhagen on Oct. 2, 2009. In selecting the candidates, the IOC evaluated 25 items divided into 11 categories, including general infrastructure, safety and security, environmental conditions and impact. Although Tokyo got the best rating in the preliminary round, a poll by the IOC to gauge domestic public opinion found only 59 percent support in Japan's capital. Madrid received a support rate of 90 percent, Rio's was 77 percent and Chicago's 74 percent.

#### DPJ presses Finance Ministry to unearth 383 who got cabby gifts

The Finance Ministry said Thursday that 383 of its staff have admitted receiving favors from taxi drivers when going home late at night, even though the rides are paid with taxpayer money. Of the 383 bureaucrats, 19 received cash or gift certificates worth up to ¥5,000 each time, with one of them getting 18 gift certificates. The other 364 were served drinks, such as beer and tea, or snacks and fruit, the ministry said. The findings are based on "emergency" interviews the ministry conducted with all 2,681 civil servants in the ministry and the National Tax Agency who work at their headquarters in Tokyo's Kasumigaseki district. The ministry conducted the interviews earlier this week at the request of House of Representatives member Akira Nagatsuma of the Democratic Party of Japan. The ministry claimed the gifts from the cabbies do not constitute bribery as the drivers are not under direct contract by the ministry. The drivers are believed to have done favors for bureaucrats who frequently requested them. In one extreme case, a bureaucrat in his 30s received about ¥2.25 million in cash and gift certificates over five years, taking taxis home as many as 150 days a year and collecting ¥3,000 in cash or certificates each time, the officials said. The ministry said it will prohibit its officials from taking gifts from drivers and order the 383 officials to return what they have so far received. The ministry said it will report the interview results to the National Public Service Ethics Board, which authorizes punishment, and consider punitive measures for those who were given favors. According to Nagatsuma, officials of not only the Finance Ministry but other government entities received gifts from taxi drivers as well.

#### TV host bests own Guinness record

Japanese TV celebrity Monta Mino again received a Guinness World Records certificate Thursday as the busiest live TV host, breaking his own record set two years ago. Mino, 63, whose real name is Norio Minorikawa, was given the certificate in a ceremony at the Tokyo head studio of Nippon Television Network Corp. by a representative of Guinness World Records Ltd. of Britain. In November 2006, Mino received a Guinness World Records certificate for the most hours on live TV in one week after clocking up 21 hours and 42 minutes, appearing regularly on two TV programs that run from Monday to Friday every week and another one Saturday. Last fall, one of the two programs was expanded by five minutes, resulting in Mino appearing on live TV for a total of 22 hours and 15 seconds, an increase of some 18 minutes.

#### Narita guard held for terror threats

NARITA, Chiba Pref. (Kyodo) Police arrested an employee of an airport security company Wednesday on suspicion that he threatened to gas or bomb Narita airport, police officials said. Tsutomu Nozawa, 25, who works for the Airport Security Business Center, admitted sending threatening e-mail messages to the Web site of Japan's main international gateway in April and May to "clear his distress," police said. Nozawa was responsible for checking luggage at the airport. Airport Security carries out security checks on departing and transit passengers, they said. Nozawa, who is being held on a charge of business obstruction, allegedly sent the airport an e-mail message on April 19 in which he threatened to produce poison gas and another on May 2 in which he threatened to destroy the airport in an explosion, they said.

#### China registering Japan locations as trademarks

Japan will step up its efforts to protect Japanese place names, including Kyoto and Hiroshima, from being registered as trademarks in China, according to government officials. As the Chinese and Japanese languages share many Chinese characters, an increasing number of Japanese geographical and local brand names have been registered as Chinese trademarks in recent years, fueling business risk concerns among the Japanese private sector, said the officials at the Japan Patent Office. Of Japan's 47 prefectures, the names of 19 have been registered as trademarks in China as of the end of last year, according to the Japan External Trade Organization. They include Aichi, Chiba, Kyoto, Nagano, Yamaguchi and Kumamoto. The patent office has been unable to trace the trademark holders, except in a few cases, such as with Gifu, which has been registered by the prefecture itself. In cooperation with the trade body, the patent office will distribute new handbooks to local governments and firms on how to guard geographical or brand names from being registered as Chinese trademarks without their knowledge.

#### Diet officially declares Ainu indigenous

The Ainu celebrated a historic moment Friday as the Diet unanimously passed a resolution that recognizes them as indigenous people of Japan. The unprecedented resolution was adopted by both chambers, acknowledging the Ainu's hardships from discrimination and poverty. "This is a historical event for us because the past injustices were finally put to an end," said Tadashi Kato, chairman of the Ainu Association of Hokkaido, who came to Tokyo to hear the Diet resolution from the gallery. "I am so thankful that the light has shone on us," he said, his voice full of emotion. The resolution states "the government shall recognize that the Ainu are indigenous people who have their own language, religion and culture." It also calls on the government to refer to the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and take comprehensive steps to advance Ainu policies while heeding the opinions of specialists. After the resolution was passed, Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura said the government now recognizes the Ainu as indigenous and promised policy measures on behalf of an ethnic minority that has been forced to lead underprivileged lives. Setting up an expert panel to discuss specific measures is also under consideration, he said. "The government would like to solemnly accept the historical fact that many Ainu were discriminated against and forced into poverty with the advancement of modernization, despite being legally equal to (Japanese) people," Machimura said. Hideaki Uemura, professor at Keisen University in Tokyo and a specialist in indigenous peoples' rights, said that while the resolution is "important and historical," it is not 100 percent satisfactory. "The resolution is weak in the sense of recognizing historical facts," Uemura said, noting the Ainu were "forced" to become Japanese in the first place.

#### GSDF private fires rifle without authorization

A Ground Self-Defense Force private fired three shots Thursday night without authorization at a GSDF base in Kyoto Prefecture while on duty, and although there were no injuries, the incident prompted Defense Minister Shigeru Ishiba to pledge Friday to tighten discipline in the ranks. The 24-year-old leading private fired one shot at the ground and the other two into the air from a Type-89 rifle while he was guarding an ammunition depot along with several others around 7:30 p.m. at the GSDF's Fukuchiyama base, according to the GSDF. The incident follows various scandals involving GSDF personnel, including the April slaying of a taxi driver in Kagoshima Prefecture for which a GSDF member has been arrested. "Those who committed these things have not had any previous problems," Ishiba said at a news conference. "We need to fundamentally review the education of the members and grasp the circumstances surrounding them." Military police are questioning the private as well as other GSDF members at the base, as one of them is suspected of having jokingly said before the firing incident, "Everybody shoots a rifle while on duty," GSDF sources said.

#### Black watermelon fetches record ¥650,000 in Hokkaido

A black jumbo watermelon auctioned in Toma, Hokkaido, fetched a record ¥650,000 Friday, making it the most expensive watermelon ever sold in Japan — and possibly the world. The 8-kg premium Densuke watermelon, grown only in Hokkaido, was purchased by a marine products dealer who said he wanted to support local agriculture. The dealer said he plans to resell the fruit in an Internet auction. In a country where melons are a luxury item commonly given as gifts, the watermelon's hefty sale follows another jaw-dropping auction last month, where a pair of Yubari cantaloupes sold for a record ¥2.5 million. Friday's winning bid drew a gasp even from veterans of the expensive-fruit market. "This is the highest price on record for a Densuke watermelon, and that probably means it's the highest of any watermelon in Japanese history," said Kazuyoshi Ohira, a spokesman for the Toma Agricultural Cooperative. The watermelon was the first of 65 sold as part of the season's initial harvest and one of 9,000 expected for the year. Unseasonably warm weather in April and May helped boost the sugar content and overall quality of the fruit this year, Ohira said. Other Densuke watermelons won't cost quite as much. Most will retail at department stores and supermarkets for a more modest ¥20,000 to ¥30,000, Ohira said. And what makes a watermelon worth so much? Its unusual black skin, Ohira said. Inside, the watermelon is crisp and hard. And, he said, it has unparalleled taste. "It's a watermelon, but it's not the same," he said. "It has a different level of sweetness."