



Abe's robot panel aims to give drone industry an edge

←Prime Minister Shinzo Abe speaks during the party's annual convention in Tokyo on Sunday. The Robot Revolution Realization Committee, an advisory panel appointed by Abe, will review existing radio and civil aeronautics laws and set up industry-run best practices for drones.

- ① The Abe administration is looking to fast-track industry-friendly regulation to give Japan's drone sector an edge over the United States.
- ② Companies from motorcycle maker Yamaha Motor Co. to security firm Secom Co. are readying drone technology and services as advisers to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe drive a regulatory overhaul.
- ③ The Robot Revolution Realization Committee, an advisory panel appointed by Abe, will review existing radio and civil aeronautics laws and set up industry-run best practices for drones.
- ④ Another panel is asking companies for ideas on how to open up new special economic zones in Tokyo and other big cities to drones on a test basis.
- ⑤ Fukushima, blighted by the 2011 tsunami and nuclear disaster, could also become a "field test zone" for robots and drones largely free of regulation.
- ⑥ "We want to keep an eye on the world's drone market, starting with the United States, and consider Japan's way of doing things," said Tamotsu Nomakuchi, who heads the robot panel. "It's not about copying other markets, but learning about them and creating something better."
- ⑦ The only aviation regulations covering drones in Japan require that they fly below 150 meters and remain at least 9 km away from airports. Drones used in agriculture need two operators, with precautions for the surrounding environment.
- ⑧ Japan has been using drones in its farming industry since the 1980s, when an unmanned Yamaha R-50 helicopter took to the air to spray pesticide on rice crops. Today, more than 2,500 agriculture drones are in operation.
- ⑨ Yamaha is now looking to adapt its drone technology for patrolling the nation's borders and for checking oil and gas pipelines, spokesman Kenji Otsuki said.
- ⑩ Secom will launch a service this month for small businesses that includes having a surveillance drone that can be scrambled to take photos of an intruder when an alarm sounds.
- ⑪ Spokeswoman Asuka Saito said the company also wants to pitch its security drones for use at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.
- ⑫ Office equipment maker Ricoh Co. has been testing its digital cameras on drones to monitor crop growth in field tests, said Wataru Ohtani, manager of new business development.
- ⑬ Partly due to the lack of regulations for outdoor test flights, Ryo Konomura, one of the founders of Tokyo University's Phenox Lab, developed an indoor drone with artificial intelligence capability.
- ⑭ Japanese industry supporters have dubbed 2015 "Year One of the Era of the Drone."【 Mar 9, 2015/ Reuters/ Japan Times】

①edge:力、有効性③the Robot Revolution Realization Committee:ロボット革命実現委員会 aeronautics:航空学・飛行術
 ⑤blight: だめにする、荒廃させる(名詞で blight は葉枯れ病)⑦precaution: 用心、警戒 ⑧pesticide: 殺虫剤⑩
 surveillance : 監視 scramble: 急いで〜にする intruder: 侵入者 ⑪pitch: 売り込む

★Ice breaker for active discussion★

1. How are drones utilized at present?
2. Do you know about drone regulations in the US? What do you think is a suitable drone regulation in Japan?
3. What could be the worst scenario of using drones?
4. What can you say about the examples of drone usages mentioned in the article?
5. Can you think of other useful and harmless ways to utilize drones?
6. Make sentences using the following words: edge, blight, pesticide, precaution, intruder, scramble, pitch and surveillance.

ドローンとは軍事用に開発された自立移動する端末ロボットのうち小型の無人航空機を指す。軍事用としては米軍が偵察用として運用中で、商業用としては、アマゾン、グーグル、ドミノピザなどが商品の配達目的での運用を表明し開発を重ねている。ドローンの開発が進む中、墜落事故の危険性やテロなどに悪用される恐れもあり各国で規制が本格化している。