



Johnny & Associates considers changing name as criticism mounts

Description

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[Banzai Japan](#)
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Johnny & Associates is considering changing its name amid growing calls that say such a move is necessary for the company to start afresh.

In the weeks since the talent agency publicly acknowledged that its late founder, Johnny Kitagawa, had sexually abused the company's underage celebrities, companies began to announce they would cancel promotion contracts with the firm's performers for their commercials.

The agency's decision during a news conference on Sept. 7 to retain the company name — despite its association with an alleged sexual predator — drew a lot of public criticism.

According to a message on the company website on Tuesday, the agency was "discussing the future of the company, taking into consideration opinions and criticisms."

The entertainment giant said that it held a board meeting earlier that day and reached a consensus regarding the basic strategy for the company's future and how it should be operated.

The agenda included: whether to change the company's name; what to do about the stocks owned by Julie Keiko Fujishima, Kitagawa's niece (she has stepped down as president but still owns 100% of the company's shares); how to compensate the victims; and what to do with its performers and other employees.

The agency said that it will make an announcement regarding the details of its discussions on Oct. 2.

The talent agency earlier this month acknowledged that Kitagawa has sexually abused its performers for decades, and apologized to the victims. Fujishima was replaced by Noriyuki Higashiyama, a senior performer at the agency, who promised to compensate the victims for their suffering.

Regarding the decisions by some companies to distance themselves from the agency by not using their performers, Masakazu Tokura, chairman of the Japan Business Federation — Japan's largest business lobby, better known as Keidanren — said that although sex abuse is a crime, cutting business ties with the scandal-hit agency will also inflict financial pain onto the victims.

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"This is child abuse. It's a criminal act. It can't be tolerated," Tokura said.

"But in a sense, the performers at Johnny's are victims, not perpetrators. They have worked hard every day," he said. "It would be damaging to deprive them of their opportunity (to perform) for a long period of time."

Meanwhile, the government plans to set up hotlines for male victims of sexual abuse, and officials well-versed on such issues will be taking the calls and connecting them to local support centers and police if necessary.

Ayuko Kato, the new minister in charge of child policies, said Tuesday that two new hotlines will be set up from Friday through Dec. 23 — one for sexual abuse against adult men, and one for boys and their parents. The government has a separate hotline for sex abuse victims regardless of gender that can be reached at #8891. Callers are connected to a local support center.

The hotline for men will be open from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Saturdays and can be reached at 0120-213-533. The hotline for boys and their parents will be open from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays and can be reached at 0120-210-109.

"Anyone can be a victim of sexual abuse regardless of gender," said Kato. "Men and boys suffering from sexual abuse can call the hotline and get the necessary support."

In a 2020 survey by the Cabinet Office, 1% of the 1,635 adult male respondents of various ages said they had experienced being forced into having sexual intercourse against their will, with the largest age group being in the 20s.

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Date Created

September 20, 2023

Author

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