

Block Access to Online Casinos to Address Gambling Epidemic

最近、著名人の関与によって注目を集めたオンラインカジノ問題。日本では明確に違法とされているにもかかわらず、利用は拡大を続けています。その背景には、政府の対応の遅れや周知不足もあると言われていいます。スマホで簡単にアクセスできるギャンブルが社会に与える影響について、あなたはどのように考えますか？



1. Article

Read the following article aloud.

Six male entertainers affiliated with the major Osaka-based talent agency Yoshimoto Kogyo have been referred to prosecutors for indictment on suspicion of gambling via the websites of online overseas casinos.

All gambling, other than publicly approved exceptions, is illegal in Japan. That includes gambling at online overseas casinos from within Japan, even if a casino is lawful in its home location. Despite a flood of misinformation, like the frequently heard misadvice, "You'll never be charged," it should be absolutely clear that online gambling is illegal.

The six men, all professional comedians, have admitted to the charges and been referred to the prosecutor's office for voluntary investigation. Now the question is what criminal penalties the prosecutor's office will impose.

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JAPAN Forward

1. Article

Some of the men reportedly bet more than ¥50 million JPY (\$341,000 USD). Summary indictments are common in cases of simple gambling offenses. However, the police have attached a memorandum arguing for a more severe indictment in light of the large amounts of money involved. Therefore, a decision to indict in this case is also a real possibility. The men may be more severely punished to set an example and deter gambling via online casinos, which has become rampant.

Comedians and other entertainers enjoy tremendous influence. That is all the more reason why the public needs to recognize that online gambling is illegal and take a firm stance against it. Already, Japan's baseball world was scandalized when it was discovered that 16 players from eight teams had gambled online. In those cases, fines were imposed.

What these incidents have in common is a shocking lack of awareness of the illegality of online casino gambling. Therefore, we would expect such influential individuals to be at the forefront in calling on members of society "to stop gambling at online casinos."

Online casinos are a frightening phenomenon. Because all payments are made via a smartphone, the speed at which a player's [debts](#) can grow is orders of magnitude faster than other forms of gambling. It can lead directly to [bankruptcies](#) and the destruction of families.

A National Police Agency survey has revealed that approximately 3.37 million Japanese have used online casino gambling services. Their total annual gambling was estimated to come to approximately ¥1.2423 trillion (nearly \$8.5 million). Many of those who gambled online were in their twenties or thirties. Although 40% were not even aware that such gambling was illegal, 60% of them had come to recognize that they were addicted. It is indeed a serious epidemic.

Since China began tightening regulations, overseas casino operators have been eyeing Japan, where regulations are more lax. Members of the Japanese public have come to be seen as easy marks and are being exploited by overseas operators.

The ruling Liberal Democratic Party has finally indicated its [intention](#) to amend the law. That would make it illegal to direct users to casino sites through online advertisements and social media. Nonetheless, so far, the government has done almost nothing to address the problem. It is only natural that the current epidemic of online gambling is being blamed on the government's inaction.

The government and media have a responsibility to promote awareness of the illegality of online gambling and expose its dangers. We should also not hesitate to impose restrictions on advertising while blocking access to casino sites.

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2. Key phrases and vocabulary

First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

1. **charge** (犯罪で) 起訴する、告発する

The business leader was charged with lying to the tax board.

2. **penalty** 罰金、刑罰

The penalty for littering is to pay a \$1000 fine.

3. **debt** 借金、負債

He is careful always to pay his debts.

4. **bankruptcy** 破産、倒産

After five difficult years, the owner of the restaurant finally had to declare bankruptcy.

5. **intention** 意図、意思、目的

Our intention at this organization is to promote peace and understanding.

3. Questions

Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. What are the six members of Yoshimoto Kogyo being charged with?
2. How common is online gambling in Japan today?
3. What is the government planning to do about the problem?
4. Is it right to punish entertainers more harshly for a crime than members of the general public?
5. What is the difference between legal forms of gambling, such as pachinko, boat racing, or horse racing, and online gambling?

4. オンラインカジノ 国の無策が蔓延を招いた

オンラインカジノで賭博をした単純賭博容疑で、吉本興業所属の男性芸人6人が書類送検された。

日本では公営ギャンブル以外の賭博は違法だ。海外で合法運営されるカジノでも、日本国内からインターネットを通じて賭ければ違法になる。「立件されない」など誤情報が氾濫するが、「オンラインカジノは違法」と明確な周知を徹底したい。

6人は容疑を認め、任意捜査で書類送検となったが、検察の刑事処分はどうか。

5千万円超を賭けていた者もいた。単純賭博罪の場合は略式起訴が目立つが、警察は起訴を求める厳重処分の意見書を付けており、金額の大きさと併せ、本裁判への起訴の判断も考えられる。蔓延（まんえん）するオンラインカジノ賭博の抑止のため、厳しい処分がとられる可能性もある。

お笑い芸人などタレントの影響力は大きい。だからこそ違法への正しい認識や、毅然（きぜん）たる態度が求められる。球界では8球団に16人の利用者がいたことが分かり、制裁金を科した。

共通するのはオンラインカジノ賭博の違法認識が乏しいことだ。本来ならこうした影響力ある者は「オンラインカジノ賭博はやめましょう」と社会に呼びかけるべき立場なのに、だ。

オンラインカジノは怖い。決済までスマートフォンで全て完結するため、負債が膨らむスピードが他の賭博とは桁違いだ。破産や家庭崩壊に直結する。

警察庁の調査でオンラインカジノ賭博の利用経験者は約337万人、年間賭博額は約1兆2423億円と推計されることが分かった。20～30代の経験者が多く、4割に違法との認識がなく、6割が依存症の自覚があると回答した。深刻な蔓延だ。

中国が規制を強め、緩い日本に海外カジノが目を向けた経緯がある。海外業者から日本は甘く見られ、搾取されている状態だ。ようやく自民党がネット広告やSNSでのカジノサイトへの誘導を違法化する法改正の方針を示したが、これまで政府は何もしてこなかったに等しい。現在の蔓延状態は国の無為無策が招いたとの誹（そし）りを受けても仕方があるまい。

違法性の周知と摘発を強力に推し進め、広告規制や「ブロッキング」によるカジノサイトへのアクセス制限の導入をためらうべきでない。

出典：オンラインカジノ 国の無策が蔓延を招いた
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