

Internationally Recognized Company Falls to Apostasy

Japan's electronics maker Panasonic Corp said on Thursday it plans to change its company rules to recognize same-sex marriages, joining a growing trend toward acceptance in a country where being openly gay largely remains taboo.

Panasonic said it is reviewing changes to its code of conduct that would ban discrimination based on sexual orientation. It is a rare move for a major Japanese corporate, and puts the company at the forefront of change.

Panasonic is considering a range of benefits for same-sex couples including wedding leave, although the details have not yet been decided, the spokeswoman said. The changes, if implemented, are set to come into effect in April, she said.

The review was prompted by requests from its employees, global trends, and its status as a sponsor of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, she added.

Panasonic's move comes as Japan slowly widens recognition of same-sex partnerships. Iga in Mie prefecture, a city 500 km southwest of Tokyo, became on Tuesday Japan's third municipal government to recognize same-sex partnerships, according to local media.

Shibuya and Setagaya, considered the wealthiest of Tokyo's 23 wards, began issuing certificates to same-sex couples last November, a decision hailed as a major step forward for Japan's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community.

While the certificates do not provide any legal recognition of same-sex unions, they allow couples to rent an apartment, visit each other in hospital and gain a variety of other

benefits as a couple. {eoa}

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