

Japan Inc scraps corporate joining events due to virus

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Japanese firms often hold ceremonies for new employees at the start of the financial year

Major Japanese firms such as Toyota and Toshiba have cancelled their traditional corporate joining ceremonies originally scheduled for next

month due to the new coronavirus, officials said Tuesday.

Toyota had planned to hold a joining event to welcome more than 1,000 new employees at its headquarters in Aichi, central Japan, on April 1.

"But we decided to cancel the ceremony due to concerns over the new coronavirus," a spokeswoman said.

It is Toyota's first cancellation of its annual event since they integrated their production and sales firms in 1982, she said, adding that president Akio Toyoda, however, plans to send a message to them "in a different form."

Toshiba has also decided to cancel a ceremony to welcome some 330 new employees originally scheduled for April 1, a spokeswoman said.

Public broadcaster NHK said Hitachi and many other companies are also following suit.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has stepped up measures to contain the virus, urging schools to close for several weeks and calling on organisers of large events to consider cancelling or delay.

Abe announced on Tuesday he had asked for a further 10-day extension to these measures before a panel of experts decides whether Japan can return to normal.

Japanese firms ranging from big names to small businesses traditionally hold corporate joining events on April 1, the first day of their fiscal year.

During the ceremonies, top managers address speeches while representatives of new employees make pledges of commitment to their

companies.

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