

JAPAN / CRIME & LEGAL

## Arrests at Hokkaido hostel after customers found working as maids



The website of the Khaosan hostel chain advertises its hostels in several popular tourism locations. People from its operator, Manryo Inc., have been arrested over alleged immigration law violations. | BLOOMBERG

KYODO, STAFF REPORT

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The manager of a hostel in Hokkaido and two others were arrested Wednesday over suspected immigration law violations for having foreign tourists work as maids in exchange for offsetting their room charges.

According to Hokkaido police, the three people from Tokyo-based Manryo Inc., which operates the Khaosan Sapporo Family Hostel, allegedly canceled a ¥2,000 accommodation fee per stay for at least two female tourists, from China and Malaysia. In return, the women worked three hours a day doing bed-making and cleaning.

The people arrested for allegedly having visitors with short-stay visas work illegally were identified as Manryo President Hiroshi

Kozawa, 45, and two workers.

Kozawa told the police he thought the guests were helping out voluntarily.

The two female guests were arrested during a police raid on Tuesday. They told the police that they had acknowledged the deal was illegal but that it was OK as no exchange of cash was involved, investigators said.

Manryo runs 13 hostels in six prefectures, including Tokyo and Kyoto, two of the most popular tourist destinations in Japan. The police believe the operator may have made similar arrangements in the entire hostel chain.

As of Wednesday morning, the Khaosan chain's website — which touts itself as "the biggest hostel and guesthouse chain in Japan" in six languages — was operating normally.

A woman from Europe who toured Japan previously and had a lengthy stay at one of the Khaosan hostels by serving as a part-timer said she believes the system is a good one, adding that she could learn Japanese through her work.

She said she had no idea the system was illegal because some European countries have similar systems for tourists.

### KEYWORDS

TOURISM([HTTPS://WWW.JAPANTIMES.CO.JP/TAG/TOURISM](https://www.japantimes.co.jp/tag/tourism)),  
HOKKAIDO([HTTPS://WWW.JAPANTIMES.CO.JP/TAG/HOKKAIDO](https://www.japantimes.co.jp/tag/hokkaido)),  
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