

Beat: Business

Japan bans child porn possession after years of debate

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USPA News - Japan's parliament has passed a bill that criminalizes the simple possession of child pornography, ending more than a decade of debate surrounding the controversial issue, but those who currently possess the material will still have a year to get rid of it. Japan was one of only two major countries in the world where the simple possession of child pornography is legal, though both the production and distribution of such material was already illegal.

Previous attempts to ban child pornography possession had repeatedly failed in Japan, but a revised bill was passed by parliament on Wednesday. The original bill that proposed an outright ban on child pornography possession was submitted to parliament last year by the ruling coalition and the opposition, but concerns about freedom of expression with regards to animated productions followed. As a result, the judicial affairs committee of Japan's lower house dropped the provision that sought to ban the possession of animated child pornography. With the bill now passed by both houses of parliament, child pornography possession is expected to become illegal next month, but those who currently possess the material will be given a year to get rid of it without punishment. After that, those who possess pornography depicting real children will face a maximum sentence of one year imprisonment or a fine of up to 1 million yen (\$9,800 dollars). Another revision to the original bill means that those who receive child pornography through unsolicited e-mails and similar means will also go unpunished. The only other major country in the world where the simple possession of child pornography remains legal is Russia, though efforts there have increased in recent years to pass legislation that would criminalize the material. As in Japan, the production and distribution of child pornography is also illegal in Russia.

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