

The JFTC Issued Cease and Desist Orders against Companies Conducting Concerted Action in Biddings for the Operations of Transporting Patients with COVID-19 ordered by Aomori City

May 30, 2024

Japan Fair Trade Commission

The Japan Fair Trade Commission (hereinafter referred to as the “JFTC”) today issued cease and desist orders against companies conducting concerted action in selective biddings for the operations of transporting patients with COVID-19 (transport operations) ordered by Aomori City, pursuant to the provisions of the Antimonopoly Act (hereinafter referred to as the “Act”).

The JFTC found that the five companies (TOBU TOP TOURS CO., LTD., Nippon Travel Agency Tohoku Co., Ltd., Meitetsu World Travel Inc., JTB Corp., and Kinki Nippon Tourist Co., Ltd.) had conspired that they would decide and cooperate for a prospective winner and that the winner would outsource a part of the transport operations in the other companies. By these conducts, the companies substantially restrained competition in the field of the transport operations, contrary to the public interest.

The conducts fall under unreasonable restraint of trade prescribed in Article 2, paragraph (6) of the Act and therefore, the participants violated Article 3 of the Act.

Besides, the JFTC found that Aomori City’s conduct was not appropriate to secure fair and free competition in the biddings and could induce or encourage companies to violate the Act. Therefore, the JFTC requested Aomori City to implement appropriate measures to conduct biddings in the future.

Furthermore, the JFTC urged that JAPAN ASSOCIATION OF TRAVEL AGENTS, of which the five companies mentioned above are the members, to make sure that all the member companies would comply the Act and would not repeat similar conducts in this case.

*This announcement is a tentative translation. Please refer to the original text written in Japanese for more details.