

Child abuse cases soar 24.2% to record high for first half

Kyodo News

The number of child abuse cases in which police took action hit 149 between January and June, up 24.2 percent from a year earlier and the most since equivalent data became available in 2000, the National Police Agency said Thursday.

Of cases involving victims under 18 years old, 113 involved physical abuse and 27 sexual abuse. Of the 164 alleged offenders in these cases, 48 were the victims' biological mothers and 45 their biological fathers, the NPA said.

Of the 157 children abused, 22 were under 1 year old.

Eighteen children died from abuse during the half-year period, compared with 28 the year before. NPA officials said police are trying to prevent child abuse from leading to death by dispatching officers to households where abuses are suspected.

The NPA also said the number of juvenile delinquents confirmed in the six-month period stood at 46,901, down 6.2 percent from a year ago and the lowest since data became available in 1979.

The number of bag snatchings and muggings committed by youths between 14 and 19 years old has been halved from 10 years ago, the NPA said.

Absenteeism on rise

The number of long-term truants in Japan's elementary and junior high schools totaled 126,764 in the 2006 school year, which ended on March 31, up 3.7 percent from the previous year for the first year-on-year increase in five years, the education ministry said in a preliminary report Thursday.

Long-term truants are defined as those who are absent for 30 days or more due to reasons other than illness or economic difficulties.

Of the total, 102,940 were junior high school students, accounting for one of every 35, or 2.9 percent, junior high school students, the report showed.

The number of truant elementary school students came to 23,824, up by about 1,000, or 4.4 percent, from the previous year and accounting for 0.3 percent of all elementary school students, the report says.

The Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Ministry conducted the annual survey on all schools in Japan, from kindergarten to university, as of May 1 to collect basic education data.

In a multiple-answer question on the reasons for skipping school, bullying was cited by 4,688 students, or 3.2 percent of the total. Bullying was added to a list of reasons for the first time in the reporting year.

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