

## Population shrank by record 183,000 in '09

Kyodo News

Japan's population has entered full-scale decline and shrank by a record 183,000 people over the past year, government data showed Friday.

As of Oct. 1, the population stood at an estimated 127,510,000 after shrinking by a record 0.14 percent, contracting for the second year in a row.

The year-on-year drop is the third to strike Japan since 1950, when comparable data first became available, the Internal Affairs and Communications Ministry said in the report. The other two shrinkages occurred in 2005, when it fell by 19,000, or 0.01 percent, and in 2008, when it contracted by 79,000, or 0.06 percent.

The ministry said its estimate was based on the results of the 2005 national census, annual data on births and deaths, and immigration data on entries and departures.

The female population stood at 65,380,000, down 61,000, or 0.09 percent, as deaths outnumbered births by 5,000, marking the first natural decline.

The male population stood at 62,130,000, down 121,000, or 0.20 percent, for the fifth consecutive annual decline as deaths exceeded births by 54,000.

Japan's population has entered a stage of full-scale decline as both men and women recorded natural decreases, ministry officials said.

The figures in the latest report included foreigners who stayed in Japan for 91 days or more and foreign students. The number of Japanese came to 125,820,000, revealing a decline of 127,000, or 0.10 percent.

The number of people who entered Japan totaled 3,114,000, up 250,000 from the previous year, while those who left the country stood at 3,237,000, up 329,000, meaning that social factors caused the total population to shrink by 124,000.

Of the 124,000, foreigners accounted for 47,000, marking the first decline in 15 years linked to social factors.

The officials attributed the decline in the foreign population to the recession triggered by the collapse of trading house Lehman Brothers in the fall of 2008.

Many foreigners lost their jobs and returned to their home countries as the financial crisis unfolded, the officials said.

The number of people aged 65 and older came to 29,005,000, up by 789,000 and accounting for 22.7 percent of the population.

In contrast, those aged 14 or younger fell by 165,000 to 17,011,000. The productive segment of the population, or those between the ages of 15 and 64, came to an estimated total of 81,493,000, shrinking by 806,000.

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