

Friday January 1, 2010

# JAPAN HAS FEWER BABIES, MORE DEATHS

## Japan's population decline accelerated in 2009, with the number of births falling 2% from the previous year

Preliminary health ministry statistics showed 22,000 fewer Japanese babies were born last year for a total of 1.069 million births. The decline follows a slight increase in 2008.

Meanwhile, the number of deaths climbed for the ninth year in a row to 1.144 million - the highest figure since the government began recording this data in 1947.

"The trend of increasing population decline is expected to continue in the future as the number of deaths increases due to the ageing of the population, while the number of women who are of childbearing age is decreasing," a ministry official said.

With extremely low fertility rates and the longest-living people in the world, Japan faces a demographic time bomb expected to overwhelm health and social welfare programmes.

Prime minister Yukio Hatoyama last week unveiled a budget which included boosted spending on child support to encourage more women to have babies.

But he faces a daunting reality.

Japan has the lowest percentage of children among 31 major countries. Its current population of 126 million is projected to shrink by a quarter by 2050, when about 40% of the country will be over 65 years old, according to government estimates.

Fewer Japanese are getting married as well. The number of marriages in 2009 fell 1.7% from a year earlier to 714,000, the health ministry said. Divorces rose by about 2,000 cases to 253,000.

The leading causes of death were cancer, heart disease and stroke.



Fewer babies were born in Japan last year



Scientific studies :

[Fertility and mobile phone radiation](#)