

## Japan's fertility up, population down

*by UPI*

TOKYO - Japanese health officials say Japan's fertility rate is up for the first time in years but the population is still shrinking.

The Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry said the fertility rate last year was 1.32, up .06 from the record low of 1.26 in 2005, Kyodo News reported Thursday.

While government officials attribute the increase to the nation's economic recovery, some experts said the rise was just a reaction to the unexpected decrease in 2005.

The increase did not reverse the long-term trend of a decreasing population of children, Kyodo said.

The government warned in 2002 the population will decline by nearly half, to 64 million, in 2100 if the rate remains at the current level.

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