

## Recidivism rate at record high in '08

Kyodo News

Crimes committed by repeat offenders accounted for 41.5 percent of offenses last year, a record high, the Justice Ministry said in a white paper on crime released Friday.

Meanwhile, the number of overall Penal Code offenses, excluding automobile-related crimes, remains on a downtrend, falling for the sixth consecutive year last year to 1.82 million cases, down 4.8 percent.

The number of murders, however, increased 8.2 percent from 2007 to 1,297.

The number of foreign nationals apprehended for committing Penal Code offenses except for traffic violations decreased to 12,611, down 5.5 percent. They accounted for 3.7 percent of all nontraffic law violators last year.

Among the some 340,000 Penal Code offenders apprehended last year excluding those breaking traffic laws, about 141,000, or 41.5 percent, were repeat offenders, marking the highest rate since 1968, when relevant data became available.

The white paper stressed the need to prevent recidivism Friday as part of efforts to reduce crime, as some 54 percent of inmates in Japanese prisons are repeat offenders.

This year's report stressed the importance of recidivism prevention, focusing on theft and violation of the stimulants control law — the two types of crime with a high likelihood of recidivism.

Last year, 174,738 people were apprehended for committing thefts, while 11,231 people were identified as violators of the stimulants control law.

The white paper said the ministry conducted a survey on offenders who were given suspended sentences in 2004 for committing these two types of crimes and put on probation for the first time.

According to the survey, 205 of the 691 thieves surveyed, or about 30 percent, violated the Penal Code again within four years, of whom 162, or about 80 percent, committed theft again.

Among stimulants control law offenders, 154 of the 519 surveyed, or about 30 percent, re-engaged in criminal activities, of whom 128, or more than 80 percent, committed drug violations again.

The white paper also looked into the backgrounds of these offenders, such as their employment status and other conditions.

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