

Japanese government to play matchmaker

17th March, 2015



Japan's government is going to play Cupid in an attempt to encourage more couples to have babies. The country has one of the lowest birth rates in the world and politicians are turning to novel methods to get people to add to the population. One of these methods is local authorities acting as matchmakers. Japan's national government will

support and local government effort at speed-dating, online matchmaking and other ways to coax couples to get together and start families. The draft recommendations call for intensive efforts over the next five years. The report says Japan faces a "critical situation" in which the dwindling number of children could cause serious social problems for the country.

One reason the government has found for Japan's falling birth rate is the rising cost of raising children. The government hopes to address this with a variety of measures. These include plans to improve access to free nursery care, special centres for people undergoing fertility treatment, and a target to increase the number of fathers taking paternity leave after their baby is born to 80% by the year 2020. There are also plans to provide greater support for families with three or more children. By 2060, nearly 40 per cent of Japan's population will be aged over 65. The over-65s already constitute 25 per cent of the population. The birth rate has fallen steadily from 4.54 children per mother in 1947 to just 1.42 in 2014.

Sources: The JapanTimes / TIME / BBC.com

Writing

Matchmaking is better than meeting people by chance. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

government / couples / birth rates / population / authorities / matchmakers / critical / raising children / variety / measures / fertility / paternity leave / steadily / mother

True / False

- Japan's government is putting on a play based on Cupid. T / F
- Japan's government is asking people to read novels to help birth rates. T / F
- Japan's government will support speed dating. T / F
- There will be big efforts to increase Japan's population within 5 years. T / F
- The cost of raising children is a big reason for falling birth rates. T / F
- More fathers will be able to take paternity leave. T / F
- By 2060, half of Japan's population will be over 65. T / F
- Japan's birthrate in 2014 was just 4.54. T / F

Synonym Match

- | | |
|--------------|----------------|
| 1. ways | a. care |
| 2. support | b. repair |
| 3. coax | c. proposals |
| 4. fix | d. encourage |
| 5. serious | e. back |
| 6. reason | f. assist |
| 7. treatment | g. methods |
| 8. plans | h. significant |
| 9. help | i. dropped |
| 10. fell | j. cause |

Discussion – Student A

- How important is free or low-cost nursery care?
- What do you know about fertility treatment?
- What is paternity leave like in your country?
- How important is it for fathers to take paternity leave?
- What's the best number of children to have?
- What are the problems of an ageing population?
- What do you think of blind dates?
- What questions would you like to ask Japan's government?

BreakingNewsEnglish - The Mini Lesson

Phrase Match

1. Japan's government is going to play
 2. one of the lowest birth
 3. politicians are turning to novel
 4. the dwindling
 5. cause serious social
 6. the rising cost of raising
 7. address this with a variety
 8. improve access to
 9. paternity
 10. The birth rate has fallen
- a. methods
 - b. of measures
 - c. problems for the country
 - d. leave
 - e. free nursery care
 - f. number of children
 - g. rates in the world
 - h. steadily
 - i. Cupid
 - j. children

Discussion – Student B

- a) What is the best matchmaking method?
- b) What do you think of online dating?
- c) What do you think of Japan's government's efforts?
- d) What is speed dating?
- e) How can governments encourage people to have more children?
- f) What do you know about Cupid?
- g) What problems are there with falling birth rates?
- h) Why aren't couples getting together and having children?

Spelling

1. an attempt to eocuaengr more couples
2. local iherotatius
3. other ways to xoca couples
4. neivnties efforts
5. Japan faces a crcliat situation
6. the diwdgninl number of children
7. Japan's falling tbhtaerir
8. a variety of euamrsse
9. people undergoing eriyliitft treatment
10. fathers taking itetyrnpa leave
11. esctonutit 25 per cent of the population
12. ... has fallen dylaeist

Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. e	3. d	4. b	5. h
6. j	7. a	8. c	9. f	10. i

Role Play

Role A – Cash bonus per child

You think a cash bonus per child is the best way to increase the birth rate. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't so good. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): free nurseries, longer paternity leave or free education for the third child.

Role B – Free nurseries

You think free nurseries are the best way to increase the birth rate. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't so good. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): a cash bonus per child, longer paternity leave or free education for the third child.

Role C – Longer paternity leave

You think longer paternity leave is the best way to increase the birth rate. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't so good. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): free nurseries, a cash bonus per child or free education for the third child.

Role D – Free education for third child

You think free education for the third child is the best way to increase the birth rate. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't so good. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): free nurseries, longer paternity leave or a cash bonus per child.

Speaking – Birth Rate

Rank these with your partner. Put the best ways to increase the birth rate at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- fertility treatment
- education
- free nurseries
- better hospitals
- Internet campaign
- longer paternity leave
- free education for third child
- cash bonus per child

Answers – True False

a	F	b	F	c	T	d	T	e	T	f	T	g	F	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.