

# Irregular Migration ; Policies and Measures Undertaken by Japan and Other Major Countries

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# Current Status of International Migration

- Total number of immigrants in 2000 is 175 million (75 million in 1965 ).
- The number of immigrants that were absorbed by developed countries in 1965 and 2000 accounted for 36.5 % and 40 % respectively.
- Increasing number of immigrants with high education and feminization of immigrants are noted. (source;IOM)

# Some Figures of Immigrants in OECD Countries in 2002

- In US over a million immigrants were granted a permanent residence permit and 1.3 million immigrants (excluding students) were given a temporary permit.
- 2.5 million immigrants were reported in EU 15 (660,000 for Germany).
- In Japan 344,000 immigrants were reported. (source; OECD/SOPEMI)

# Illegal Immigrants/Irregular Migration

- Estimates on illegal immigrants in the US vary between several million to 12million depending on analysts.
- IOM's estimate on illegal immigrants in EU is around some 3 million.
- Current estimate on overstayers in Japan is slightly more than 200,000. As illegal immigrants, clandestine entrants should be added to the figure of overstayers.

# Social Factors/Backgrounds behind Migration Control

- Average unemployment rate in OECD countries is around 7 %.
- Aging population and low birth rates generate the need for foreign labor.
- Technological advancement as seen in IT generates the ongoing need for highly educated/skilled labor.
- Security consideration is seriously taken after 9,11.
- Continuously increasing irregular migration including bogus asylum claims is a major and urgent concern.

# Various Modes of Irregular Migration

- Clandestine Entrants and Overstayers
- Forgery of Passports, Visas and other Documents
- False Marriage (Marriage just on paper), False Students, Pretending to be a bona fide Tourists and other Legitimate Visitors
- Manifestly Unfounded and/or Abusive Claims for Asylum
- Human Smuggling/Trafficking

# Migration Control Policies Taken by OECD Countries

- (1) Severer Penalization against Irregular Migration in general
- (2) Introduction of Employers Sanction and Penalization of other Collaborators
- (3) Severe Penalties for Human Smuggling/Trafficking
- (4) Introduction of New Concepts in Screening Asylum Cases such as “Safe Home Country” and “Safe Third State”
- (5) Increasing International Cooperation in Curbing Irregular Migration

# Policy Orientation of Japanese Immigration Control

- Amid increasing attention toward the function of immigration control, the authorities have been facing with the frequently ambivalent policy goals.
- Smooth processing of immigration procedures for those who fulfill the conditions for entry and stay
- Exclusion of inadmissible foreigners at a port of entry and deportation/removal of illegal immigrants

# General Tendency of Japanese Immigration Control

1. Japanese Immigration Control used to be rather preoccupied with coping with the situations existing at that stage, such as influx of Vietnamese refugees and displaced persons, Chinese disguised as Vietnamese boat people, mal-use of Japanese language school, sharp increase of overstayers in early 1990s, crimes committed by illegal foreigners, and others.
2. It is not intended to bring about social/demographic changes through migration policy, but to implement the existing provisions of laws and rules.
3. Divergent views from various sectors have been proposed for potential courses of immigration control policy, however, there seems to be no consensus.

# Foreigners Eligible to Work in Japan

According to the statistics on the alien registration published by the Ministry of Justice as of the end of 2003,

- (1) Permanent Resident (excluding descendents of pre-war residents) 267,000
- (2) Spouses of Japanese 263,000
- (3) Long Term Resident 245,000
- (4) Those Who Are Conferred a Status of Residence for Business/Employment 186,000

# Efforts to Tackle Illegal Migration

- Since the number of overstayers reached its peak ( almost 300,000) in early 1990s, Ministry of Justice and the Police Agency stepped up their efforts to reduce illegal migrants. Due to their efforts, its figure has been gradually decreasing to slightly more than 200,000.
- Annually around 10,000 are refused to enter at a port of entry, while around 30,000 are deported.

# Brief Comparison between Japan and Other OECD Countries

- Situations surrounding immigration control are more or less similar to most OECD countries. Thus, modalities taken by most governments came to resemble. (for instance, introduction of employer sanction, heavy penalization of related crimes for illegal migration and so on)
- Japan differs in a few points; no intention for amnesty to illegal immigrants, no acceptance of unskilled labor as such despite shortage, and rather small number of asylum seekers.

# Challenges for Japanese Immigration Policy

The third Immigration Control Basic Plan published recently includes the followings.

1. Smooth Acceptance of Foreigners
  - (1) Professionals and Skilled Laborers
  - (2) Measures to cope with the decrease of population (ambiguous yet, most probably enlarging the categories of accepting workers)
  - (3) Encouraging tourists, proper acceptance of students, trainees and technical interns
2. Further Toughening Immigration Control at Border and Reducing Illegal Immigrants in Japan

# Some Comments on Immigration Control Policy

- Japan and many European countries used to view their country not as a country of immigration.
- Most governments thought they can effectively control immigration. They also believe effective policy will bring about results intended.
- Japanese government thinks that costs of receiving immigrants will be a huge burden on its society. Despite various recommendations and suggestions by UN and others, it seems tempted to think that Japanese society can cope with future labor shortage without low-wage foreign labor.