

China wants East China Sea peaceful

by UPI

BEIJING - Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, preparing for his Japan trip, said Wednesday he wants to make the East China Sea "a sea of peace, friendship and cooperation."

Speaking to Japanese reporters ahead of next week's three-day Japan trip, Wen also said China would continue to promote the six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear program, noting a movement towards denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula was underway, the official Xinhua news agency reported.

Wen said he also hoped visits to a controversial shrine in Tokyo by Japanese leaders "will never happen again," Xinhua reported. Regular visits by Japan's former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to the shrine honoring the Japanese war dead including war criminals had strained Sino-Japanese relations.

Wen told the journalists the East China Sea issue is of key concern to both countries and that China has proposed making joint exploration. The dispute is over natural gas exploration rights in the sea where a Chinese group has been exploring in an area whose waters are claimed by Japan.

The two countries have had seven rounds of talks on the issue, which Wen said have been positive.

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