

Statement by Prime Minister Abe

~Pledge for everlasting peace~

Today, I paid a visit to Yasukuni Shrine and expressed my sincere condolences, paid my respects and prayed for the souls of all those who had fought for the country and made ultimate sacrifices. I also visited Chinreisha, a remembrance memorial to pray for the souls of all the people regardless of nationalities who lost their lives in the war, but not enshrined in Yasukuni Shrine.

While praying for the souls of the war dead, the preciousness of peace Japan enjoys today really came home to me.

The peace and prosperity Japan enjoys today is not created only by those who are living today. The peace and prosperity we enjoy today is built on the precious sacrifices of numerous people who perished on the field wishing for the happiness of their loving wives and children, and thinking about their fathers and mothers who had raised them.

Today, I have contemplated on this, and paid my deepest respects and gratitudes on my visit.

Japan must never wage a war again. This is my conviction based on the severe remorse for the past. I have renewed my determination before the souls of the war dead to firmly uphold the pledge never to wage a war again.

I have also made a pledge that we must build an age which is free from the sufferings by the devastation of war; Japan must be a country which joins hands with friends in Asia and friends around the world to realize peace of the entire world.

For 68 years after the war, Japan created a free and democratic country, and consistently walked the path of peace. There is no doubt whatsoever that we will continue to pursue this path. Under the spirit of international cooperation, Japan will discharge its responsibilities for the peace stability and prosperity of the world.

Regrettably, it is a reality that the visit to Yasukuni Shrine has become a political and diplomatic issue. Some people criticize the visit to Yasukuni as paying homage to war criminals, but the purpose of my visit today, on the anniversary of my administration's taking office, is to report before the souls of the war dead how my administration has worked for one year and to renew the pledge that Japan must never wage a war again.

It is not my intension at all to hurt the feelings of the Chinese and Korean people. It is my wish to respect each other's character, protect freedom and democracy, and build friendship with China and Korea with respect, as did all the previous Prime Ministers who visited Yasukuni Shrine.

I would like to ask for the kind understanding of all of you.