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Wu Shengli, commander of the People's Liberation Army navy, will not meet with visiting Japanese naval officials during the upcoming Western Pacific Naval Symposium, a navy spokesman said on Sunday.

Japanese warships were not invited to the joint maritime exercise that China is hosting to mark the 65th anniversary of the establishment of the PLA navy, which falls on Wednesday. The exercise coincides with the symposium, which will be on Tuesday and Wednesday. Both events will take place in the coastal city of Qingdao, Shandong province.

A series of inappropriate actions by the Japanese government and leaders have severely hurt the Chinese people's feelings and Sino-Japanese relations, navy spokesman Liang Yang said, in his media debut.

Under the circumstances, it is improper to invite Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force to join the exercise, called Maritime Cooperation 2014, to celebrate the navy's anniversary, he said.

Katsutoshi Kawano, chief of staff of Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force, is expected to arrive in Qingdao on Monday. The last time the two countries' top naval officials met was in 2009.

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This is the first time that China has hosted the naval symposium, which was first held in 1987 as a forum at which naval officers of Asia-Pacific countries could meet biennially to discuss initiatives to address regional and global maritime issues.

Liang said China invited all symposium members, including Japan and the Philippines, to the forum. But the joint exercise is not an activity within the symposium's framework, he said.

"As for the exercise, China has invited some members of the symposium, as well as some nonmembers, to the exercise," he said. Manila will send naval delegates to the symposium, Liang said.

A fleet review had also been planned to mark the anniversary, but China canceled the plan last week because of the continuing search for missing Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370, with 239 people, including 154 Chinese citizens, on board.

A Japanese official said in March that Tokyo was not invited to the review because Beijing is intentionally excluding Japan due to tensions in the East China Sea. Liang said last week that the symposium, fleet review and joint exercise were separate matters.

China's decision to hold exercises during the symposium came from the common practice of previous hosts, with the purpose of deepening communication and cooperation, Liang said on Sunday.

Chinese naval forces, primarily from the North Sea Fleet, and seven visiting warships will form a joint fleet to perform exercises in waters off Qingdao.

The exercise will focus on maritime search and rescues in a bid to strengthen countries' cooperation and ability in the field and to better address emergency maritime issues, Liang said.

"The ability of international cooperation and communication is critical for the development of navies, since they have more opportunities to interact with foreign militaries," said Zhang Junshe, deputy head of the Naval Research Institute of the PLA.

"I am glad to see that the PLA navy is playing a more important and active role on the global stage," he said.

By Sunday afternoon, all seven visiting vessels had arrived in Qingdao. They are from Bangladesh, Brunei, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan and Singapore.

"This is the Brunei navy's first deployment to China. It is an honor to be here," said Willie Padan, commander of the Brunei patrol ship Darulehsan.

He said the symposium gives Brunei an opportunity to engage not only with China, but other countries in the Asia-Pacific region as well.

"Since we are a small country in terms of population, we will absorb as much as we can to gain experience from bigger nations, including China," he said.

Puruvir Das, commander of the Indian frigate Shivalik, said navies from different countries should continue to strengthen their exchanges in the future and constantly improve the cooperation.

"This is my first trip to Qingdao. Our officers and I are looking forward to interacting with other officials and visiting the city," he said.

Captain Rashid Zafar Cheema, commander of Pakistan frigate Shamsheer, said: "China has done an excellent job organizing this international event. I am looking forward to meeting fellow navies and learning from them." Pakistan has asked to be an observer of the symposium.

