



By: TA | AP Brief

South Korea's Lee in Tokyo to highlight friendly ties with Japan



South Korean President Lee Jae Myung is in Tokyo to hold his first full summit with Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba in a visit largely aimed at showcasing friendly ties between the two Asian neighbors that now face common challenges from America, their mutual ally.

Lee's visit Saturday comes in an unusual order — putting Japan ahead of the United States — helping him to better prepare for his crucial first summit in Washington with U.S. President Donald Trump, mainly on trade and defense issues.

His Tokyo visit before Washington is well received by Japanese officials who see it as a sign Lee is placing great importance to **relations** between the two neighbors whose ties have been repeatedly disrupted by historical disputes, hampering their trilateral coordination with Washington.

For Ishiba, who faces **pressure** from rightwing rivals within his governing party to resign over its July election loss, Lee's visit and a successful summit could shore up his support.

Rintaro Nishimura, an associate with The Asia Group's Japan branch, said the timing of Lee's visit shows "his way of pragmatic diplomacy" with a focus both on bilateral and trilateral relations with the U.S. "Obviously tariffs play a big part, but I also think it was a gesture from Lee to show that Japan is very important in his mind as a partner in his foreign policy," he said.

For the two leaders, who last met only on the sidelines of the Group of Seven summit in June, Saturday's talks are largely symbolic and aimed at highlighting their friendship and focusing on exchanges as this year also marks the 60th anniversary of normalizing their diplomatic ties, he said.

Possible outcomes of the meeting include fast-track entry visas for South Korean travelers and working holiday programs.

missile development

The two leaders are also expected to discuss mutual concerns including North Korea's nuclear and missile development and China's growing assertiveness in the region.

Ishiba, who met Trump in Washington in February and held talks with him at the June G7 summit, has **settled** a tariffs deal ahead of South Korea, enabling him to coordinate with Lee ahead of his summit in the U.S.

The summit comes just days after the two leaders signaled their conciliatory approach to each other.

Ishiba expressed "remorse" over the war which he called a mistake

In his Aug. 15 **address** marking the liberation from Japan's 1910-1945 colonization of the Korean Peninsula, Lee called for the two sides to overcome grievances rooted in Japan's brutal rule and develop future-oriented ties, though he urged Tokyo to face the issues that remain unresolved and strive to maintain trust.

In his interview with Japan's conservative Yomiuri newspaper published Thursday, Lee also said he will stick to past agreements with the Japanese government on the forced labor issues and sexual abuses of the so-called "comfort women," though hard feelings remain among many Koreans.

Ishiba, who has acknowledged Japan's wartime aggression and has shown empathy toward Asian victims, **expressed** "remorse" over the war which he called a mistake, restoring the word in a Japanese leader's Aug. 15 surrender anniversary address for the first time since its 2013 removal by former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

North Korea's nuclear and