

《China tells ROK envoy fixing relations crucial》

China hopes the Republic of Korea will take effective measures to "remove the stumbling block" so it can get its relationship with China back on the track of healthy development, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on Thursday.

Wang met on Thursday in Beijing with former ROK prime minister Lee Hae-chan, a special envoy sent by the new ROK President Moon Jae-in.

"Since last year, the bilateral relationship has suffered an undeserved frustration, which we are not willing to see," Wang told Lee in his opening remarks.

Lee's trip comes at a time when the ties between the two countries have been impacted by the deployment in the ROK of the US Terminal High Altitude Area Defense, or THAAD, anti-missile system over Beijing's objections.

The bilateral ties have made remarkable progress, since being established 25 years ago, to the benefit of the two sides, a fact that both countries should cherish and endorse, Wang said.

This is the second time Lee visited China as a presidential special envoy. Fourteen years ago, he came as a representative of ROK president Roh Moo-hyun.

Lee told Wang that before his China trip, Moon had asked him to enter into intensive dialogues with China.

Seoul recognizes the damage to the ties prompted by the THAAD deployment, it understands Beijing's concerns and is ready to seek a solution to tackle the issue, Lee said.

Observers said it remains to be seen how Moon's new administration will tackle the problem triggered by THAAD.

Jin Canrong, a professor of international relations at Renmin University of China, said Moon is embracing opportunities at this moment.

China rightfully criticizes the THAAD deployment, which damages China's strategic interests and brings no good to the region, Jin said.

"Meanwhile, the overall ties should be brought back to a stable status," Jin added.

Signs of hope about the relationship emerged after Moon was elected on May 9.

President Xi Jinping sent a congratulatory telegraph to Moon on May 10 and held a phone conversation with him a day later.

During that conversation, the two leaders agreed to keep contacts open and to meet at an early date.

Another ROK delegation, led by Park Byeong-suk, former deputy speaker of the National Assembly, visited China to attend the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, held in Beijing on Sunday and Monday.

State Councilor Yang Jiechi met with Park on Monday and said, "China puts emphasis on its ties with the ROK and hopes that the bilateral relations will be improved and developed from a new starting point."

