

Tsai eyes security dialogue with Japan

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A photograph of President Tsai Ing-wen is pictured in yesterday's edition of the Sankei Shimbun, which contained an interview with Tsai.

Photo: CNA

President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) has for the first time expressed intent to conduct direct dialogue with the Japanese government on cybersecurity and regional security issues.

Tsai said in an interview published by Japan's Sankei Shimbun yesterday that she would "respect Japan's opinion" regarding how such dialogue should be held.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has proven "very friendly" toward Taiwan since assuming office, making significant decisions toward improving Taiwan-Japan relations, said Tsai, who used the interview as an opportunity to express her gratitude to Abe.

Japan last year backed Taiwan when it was refused access to the World Health Assembly as an observer and a meeting of the International Civil Aviation Organization, she said.

Meanwhile, it is important for Taipei and Tokyo to share information in real time about Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) movements, as the PLA Navy and PLA Air Force must pass by Okinawa or Taiwan to enter the Western Pacific, Tsai said.

As Taiwan and the Ryukyu Islands form part of the first island chain, the nation should

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emphasize its necessity in terms of geopolitics, especially in what could develop into a “second cold war” between the US and China, she said.

For the sake of regional peace and stability, Tsai said that Taiwan would not antagonize China and would handle cross-strait relations carefully.

However, she said that “when we must make something clear, we will not hesitate to tell China — and the world — explicitly.”

She cited as an example Chinese President Xi Jinping’s (习近平) proposal in a speech on Jan. 2 to create a Taiwanese version of Beijing’s “one country, two systems” framework, saying that Taiwan stood its ground by telling China and the world that such a system was not acceptable.

She called on Japan to “overcome legal obstacles” and seek pragmatic and active collaboration with Taiwan, despite the absence of official diplomatic ties.

Tsai expressed cautious optimism about a Taiwan-US summit, although she did not directly answer whether, if such an event happened, she would be invited to speak before the US Congress or meet with US President Donald Trump.

She also expressed Taiwan’s hope to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, saying that the nation’s economic performance would benefit signatories of the trade deal.

Commenting on the passage of a referendum in November last year to uphold a ban on food imports from Japan’s Fukushima, Ibaraki, Gunma, Tochigi and Chiba prefectures, Tsai said that Taiwan hopes its passage would not affect Taiwan-Japan trade and relations.

Taiwan hopes to open dialogue with Japan and jointly seek a resolution to the issue that would comply with the spirit of WTO regulations on trade disputes while also respecting domestic

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law, she said.

Taiwan must elicit more international support and build a community in which values, trade and defense are freely shared, Tsai said, adding that the nation should let its friends in the international community understand the importance of its continued existence.

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