

THE INDEPENDENT VOICE IN ASIA

the japan times

INCORPORATING

The New York Times

INTERNATIONAL EDITION

Weekend

SATURDAY-SUNDAY, NOV. 18-19, 2023

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Leaders express desire to overcome differences

Kishida, Xi aim for trade boost despite tension

GABRIELE NINIVAGGI
AND GABRIEL DOMINGUEZ
STAFF WRITERS

In their first meeting in a year, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and Chinese President Xi Jinping on Thursday reaffirmed their commitment to “a mutually beneficial relationship” between Japan and China, despite a spate of deep rifts on issues such as national security and the economy.

The talks signaled initial momentum toward a cautious detente between the two neighbors, but didn’t result in any concrete progress over any divisive political issues, with the two countries appearing to prioritize an improvement in economic ties.

In his opening remarks, Kishida voiced his desire to work together to build a brighter future in bilateral relations.

“As neighbors who share a long history and a long future, Japan and China have a responsibility to coexist and prosper together, while contributing to world peace and stability as powers leading the region and the international community,” Kishida said, noting how this year marks the 45th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the two countries.

Xi struck a similar note, emphasizing the necessity of handling divergent views “adequately” and grasping the “flow of the current times.”

“In a rapidly changing international situation, peaceful coexistence, long-standing friendship, mutually beneficial cooperation and joint development are in the interest of the people of both China and Japan,” the Chinese leader said.

In the hourlong meeting on the sidelines of an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in San Francisco, the two leaders confirmed their continued efforts toward “the comprehensive promotion of a mutually

beneficial relationship based on common strategic interests,” a cooperation framework established in 2006 and formalized in a joint statement two years later.

That framework defines the relation between Japan and China as “one of the most important bilateral relationships” for the two countries and enshrines cooperation to enhance peace and friendship as the two countries’ “sole option.”

Kishida and Xi also agreed to establish a new dialogue framework on trade, a move that comes amid ongoing restrictions on semiconductors and other key technological components.

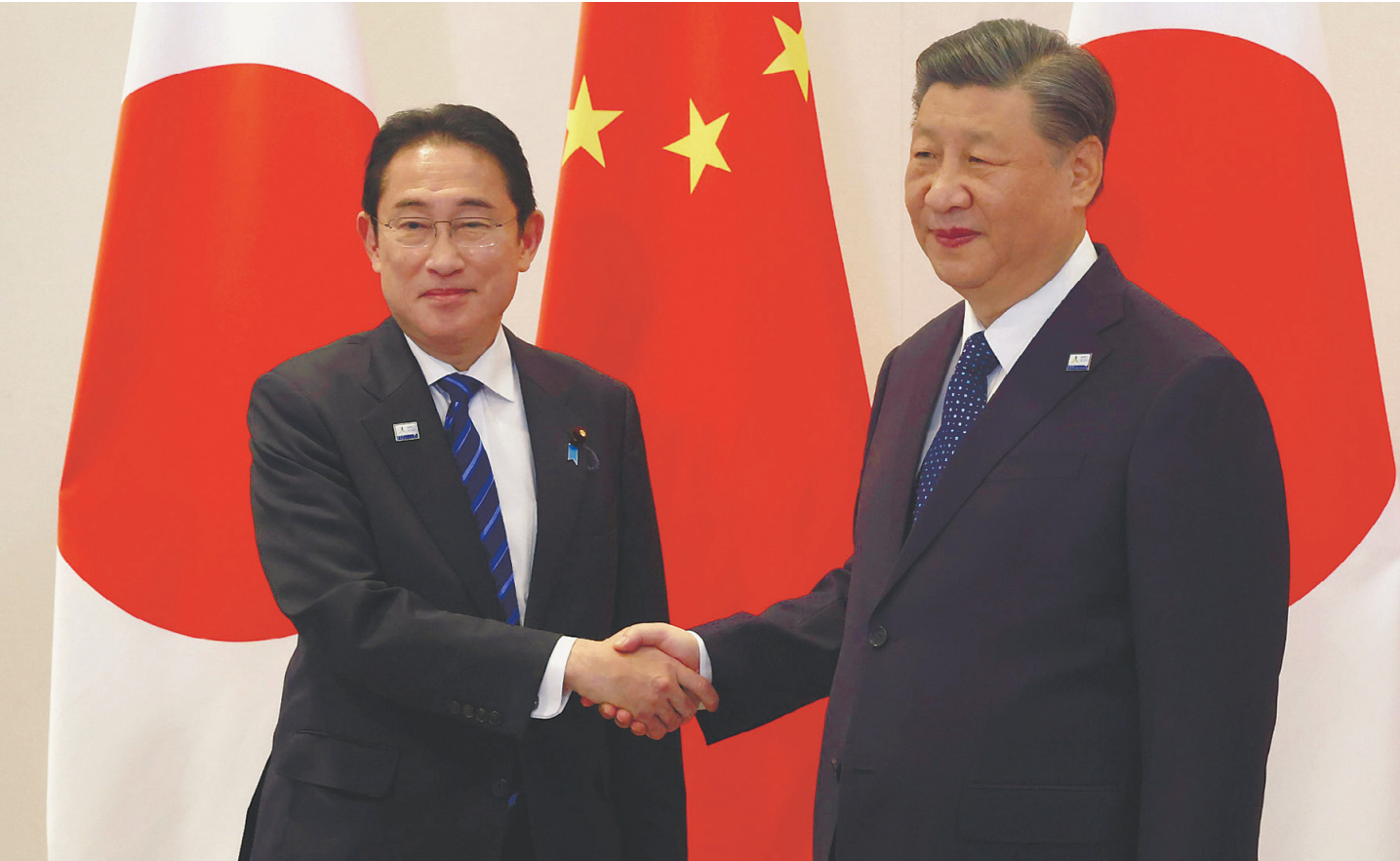
The Kishida-Xi summit also came on the same day that Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa confirmed that Tokyo, Beijing and Seoul plan to resume high-level talks, although a date for a trilateral foreign ministers meeting has yet to be determined.

However, despite the conciliatory tone seen in the meeting, the relationship between Beijing and Tokyo has tumbled to fresh lows since the two leaders met in Bangkok a year ago.

In late August, Beijing implemented a blanket ban on all Japanese seafood following Tokyo’s decision to release 1.3 million tons of treated water from the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant. The restrictions struck a blow to Japan’s marine sector — especially that of Hokkaido — and irked Tokyo, which issued a formal complaint and threatened to bring the case to the World Trade Organization.

Since then, the two countries have repeatedly clashed at international meetings, with China vehemently condemning the release of what it claims to be “nuclear-contaminated water” and Japan demanding an immediate lift of what it calls an unscientific measure.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Kishida said the two leaders agreed to address the issue through “dialogue and



consultation,” but fell short of charting a concrete path toward a solution.

In 2022, China and Hong Kong represented the two largest markets for Japan’s fishing industry, with exports amounting to 42% of total sales overseas. That same year, Beijing was Japan’s largest trading partner, well ahead of the United States.

That said, a Chinese concession to lift the seafood restrictions at this stage was always seen as unlikely.

“China doesn’t tend to reverse these trade decisions quite so quickly, especially only a few months after sounding a red alarm,” said Chase Blazek, Asia-Pacific analyst at U.S.-based geopolitics and intelligence firm RANE, pointing out that from Beijing’s perspective this is mainly a political gesture, particularly as Japanese marine products make up a surprisingly small portion of China’s total seafood imports.

At the heart of the matter, he argued, are a number of strategic issues affecting the relationship, including Japan’s efforts to boost regional military partnerships to deter China, as well as recent statements that the security of Taiwan — which Beijing regards as a breakaway province — is critical to the security of the wider region and the world.

During the talks with Xi, Kishida reiterated his concerns over China’s military operations in the region and demanded removal of a buoy installed in Japan’s exclusive economic zone.

But perhaps the biggest takeaway from these and previous talks between the two sides in San Francisco was their willingness to temporarily put aside political disagreements and focus on getting their economic and trade relations back on track.

On Tuesday, the countries’ economy ministers agreed to set up a framework to discuss export controls, with the aim of facilitating conversations on policy, including potential changes to trade and engagement strategies.

But an outstanding question is the role of U.S. policy in Sino-Japanese ties. Washington has set the tone by being first to set the recent export controls, which Japan agreed to join earlier this year. The move saw Tokyo impose restrictions on 23 chipmaking tools to align with a U.S. policy aimed at restricting China’s ability to produce advanced semiconductors.

That said, a major difference between Japanese and American export controls is that the U.S. rules are aimed specifically at China, whereas Tokyo’s licensing changes are country agnostic. This could provide Japan with additional room to make progress on trade relations with China, said Emily Benson, an international trade expert at the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies, with Beijing having tightened export controls on gallium and germanium, two elements needed to make chips.

The economy ministers also agreed to set up a working group to improve the busi-

ness environment, with this encompassing moves to ensure the safety of Japanese businesspeople in China. The case of a Japanese executive of a pharmaceutical company who was sentenced to 12 years in a Chinese prison on espionage charges has worsened already strained business ties and shone the spotlight on the number of Japanese nationals jailed in the country.

One of the main drivers behind Beijing’s conciliatory tone appears to have been the ongoing economic slowdown in China.

“China’s economic difficulties and their implications for social stability and regime legitimacy have made Beijing more eager to improve relations with countries important to its economy than was the case six to 12 months ago,” said Thomas Fingar, an East Asia expert at Stanford University.

The Chinese economy is facing a combination of challenges that have shaken consumer confidence, with these including turmoil in the real estate sector and high youth unemployment.

“With domestic demand constrained in these ways, foreign trade is essential for the Chinese economy,” said Willem Thorbecke,

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U.S. and EU back U.N. force inside postwar Gaza

SIMON MARKS
BLOOMBERG

The U.S. and its European allies are pushing a plan to deploy an international peace-keeping force in the Gaza Strip after the war, according to people familiar with the matter, raising pressure on Israel to bring its military operation to an end as civilian casualties mount.

The people, who asked not to be identified discussing private deliberations, said U.S. and European officials concede big questions remain about whether such an operation would be workable in Gaza, and recognize that Israel remains highly skeptical of such a plan. But they said even discussing the idea may help push Israel to think more about wrapping up the campaign and consider what might come next.

The discussions, centered on the United Nations Security Council, remain preliminary. They come partly in response to growing international calls for a ceasefire in Israel’s assault on Hamas, which is labeled a terrorist group by the U.S. and the EU.

In a sign of growing impatience with Israel’s offensive, which has killed more than 11,000 people, according to Hamas-backed authorities in Gaza, the Security Council Wednesday approved a resolution calling for humanitarian pauses in the fighting. The U.S. didn’t use its veto to block the measure, in a rare break from its lock-step support of Israel.

One option being considered by U.S. and European officials would involve an expanded role for the U.N. Truce Supervision Organization, which was first established in 1949 to help implement armistice agreements between Palestinian Arabs and Israelis following the war that broke out in 1948 after the creation of Israel as a country.

Similar U.N. structures across the globe could be used as a template, the people said, pointing to a U.N.-backed troop deployment to Haiti led by Kenyan soldiers and another force mandated by the U.N. Security Council

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Autumn pleasures

Dobin mushi’s teapot-shaped delights pair perfectly with the cooler seasons | **FOOD, PAGE 14**

Kishida, Yoon vow closer ties

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Reversing the trend

China eyes Singapore’s model in an attempt to solve housing woes | **WORLD, PAGE 4**

ISSN 0289-1956 © THE JAPAN TIMES, LTD., 2023

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Ennosuke handed suspended prison term

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The Tokyo District Court sentenced kabuki actor Ichikawa Ennosuke IV to three years in prison on Friday, suspended for five years, over his involvement in his parents’ deaths by suicide.

The 47-year-old, whose real name is Takahiko Kinoshi, had been on trial over his role in a family suicide pact. The plan was enacted at his residence in Tokyo’s Meguro Ward on the night of May 17 and lasted into the following day.

Prosecutors had sought three years in prison.

Presiding Judge Kenji Yasunaga said Ennosuke’s acts were short-sighted and said he should bear criminal responsibility, adding he played a large role in the death of his parents.

“Even considering the defendant’s thought process at the time of the crime, assuming it was narrow due to personal circumstances, there are not many factors in the circumstances and motives leading to the crime” that could be used as the basis for leniency, he said.



A Tokyo district court judge handed popular kabuki actor Ichikawa Ennosuke IV a three-year prison sentence, suspended for five years, during a court hearing on Friday. KYODO

However, the judge handed down a suspended sentence in consideration of how Ennosuke, who also attempted to take his own life, has shown remorse and pledged to never commit a crime again.

According to the ruling, Ennosuke gave his father — Hiroyuki, 76, who was also a famous kabuki actor and known as Ichikawa Danshiro — and his mother, Nobuko, 75, an excessive amount of sleeping pills, resulting in their deaths. Ennosuke crushed the pills with a hammer and mixed them into flavored water so that it would be painless for the parents, it said.

His mother was found dead at the scene, while his father’s death was confirmed at a hospital, the ruling also said.

The trigger for the incident was apparently an article in a weekly magazine about Ennosuke’s alleged bullying and sexual harassment of actors and staffers in his theater collective.

In a first trial hearing on Oct. 20, Ennosuke admitted to having searched for ways to kill himself after the magazine notified him of its plans for the article, believing that suicide was his only option. He then told his parents

of his plans, but his mother said that they “can’t let you go alone,” to which his father agreed, Ennosuke said.

During the hearing, Ennosuke denied requesting that his parents kill themselves together with him and expressed remorse at what had transpired.

Furthermore, he admitted that he had experienced depression in various stages of his life and had trouble opening up, which contributed to his decision.

The kabuki actor began his career in the early 1980s and became a major figure in the art form, following in his father’s footsteps. He has also appeared in several popular television series.

During the hearing, the actor expressed his intention to continue his career after the trial, saying that he would like to “make amends through kabuki.”

If you or someone you know is in crisis and needs help, resources are available. In case of an emergency in Japan, please call 119 for immediate assistance. The TELL Lifeline is available for those who need free and anonymous counseling at 03-5774-0992.



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