BEIJING (AP) — China's new leader Xi Jinping will confer with President Barack Obama next month in California, months earlier than expected, as both sides seek to stem a drift in relations, troubled by issues from cyberspying to North Korea.

The June 7-8 meeting at a retreat southeast of Los Angeles, announced Monday by the White House, underlines the importance of the relationship between the countries as they work out ways for the U.S.-led world order to make room for a China that is fast accruing global influence and military power.

President Xi has said China wants its rise to be peaceful, but that Beijing will not compromise on issues of sovereignty — a stance that has aggravated disputes over contested East and South China Seas islands with several countries, including staunch U.S. allies Japan and the Philippines.

Among the other pressing items on the presidents' agenda: the spotty global economic recovery, U.S. allegations of persistent Chinese cyberattacks and espionage and Washington's desire for China to do more in international efforts to curb North Korea's nuclear program.

Washington has also criticized Beijing, along with Russia, for blocking tougher U.N. Security Council measures aimed at ending the bloodshed in Syria. China, for its part, has repeatedly lashed out at the U.S. military's ongoing strengthening of its presence in Asia, what it considers Washington's support for Japan in its island dispute with Beijing, and the U.S. questioning of China's human rights record and military buildup.

The meeting will be "of great significance to strengthening strategic communications, increasing strategic mutual trust ... properly handling disputes, developing cooperative relations and building a new type of big-power relationship," Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei said.

The issues are so many that the agenda was becoming crowded for any Obama and Xi meeting.

The two leaders have spoken by telephone since Obama was re-elected and Xi elevated to Communist Party chief in November. Xi was named China's head of state in March for the first of what are expected to be two five-year terms.

The two met previously in February 2012, when Xi traveled to the U.S. as vice president and leader-in-waiting.

But before Monday's announcement, their first face-to-face meeting as leaders of their respective nations had not been expected until September in Russia, on the sidelines of the summit of the Group of 20 large economies.

"They needed more than 20 minutes on the sidelines of another meeting," said Bonnie Glaser of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. "If they want to see U.S.-China relations on a solid footing, to manage the differences and find issues to cooperate on — North Korea, Iran, climate change — it has to start at the top. U.S.-China relations are not managed from the bottom up but from the top down."

The White House, in its statement, said the two presidents will "discuss ways to enhance cooperation, while constructively managing our differences, in the years ahead."

The decision to hold a working visit instead of a pomp-filled state summit underscores the government's decision to put protocol aside to focus on substance. Xi will make the stop-off in California after traveling to Trinidad and Tobago, Costa Rica and Mexico.

"The engagement has become more flexible, and that helps keep the contact at the highest levels, which is conducive to
understanding each other's viewpoints and taking more effective measures," Zhu Feng, deputy director of the Center for International and Strategic Studies at Peking University.

The Foreign Ministry's Hong pointed to cooperation on issues including climate change, energy security, North Korea, and Iran. Disputes also exist, he said, without offering details, and require "proper handling and active controlling by both sides."

U.S. diplomats have said that Chinese officials had wanted Obama to come to Beijing late this year or early next. His last visit was in 2009. Xi's predecessor as president, Hu Jintao, was given a formal White House welcome in 2011.

To prepare for the California meeting, Obama's national security adviser, Tom Donilon, will go to Beijing on May 26-28, White House press secretary Jay Carney said.