

Mideast countries should come together to address challenges — Abe

AMMAN (JT) — Visiting Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has urged Middle East countries to unite in their fight against terrorism and efforts to address other

regional challenges, vowing that his country would pursue its policy of "proactive contribution to peace".

In an interview with The Jordan Times and Al

Rai on Saturday, the Japanese premier said that he feels "a grave sense of crisis" as the Middle East is facing unprecedented difficulties with the stalling of Middle East peace

negotiations, the continuing crisis in Syria and the rise of extremist groups that challenge the existing international order.

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"In particular, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which has gained strength beyond borders in Iraq and Syria, represents a grave threat to the international community," he said.

"My hope is that countries in the Middle East, including Jordan, come together to make efforts towards securing peace and stability in the region. Japan will help," he said, through providing "firm support in

non-military areas to endeavours to secure peace and stability. Japan will extend a total of \$200 million to countries in the region for their fight against ISIL, along with assistance amounting to approximately \$2.5 billion to the entire Middle East region, which will include humanitarian assistance and infrastructure development assistance".

On bilateral ties, Abe highlighted the high level of cooperation and coordination between

Amman and Tokyo, adding that his country has long been a partner in Jordan's development process, particularly through economic cooperation.

"Taking this opportunity, we will work to further extend our cooperation into broader areas. Business leaders from Japan are accompanying me on this visit. The government of Japan is firmly committed to providing support to boost business exchanges to advance bilateral eco-

nomic relations."

The premier added that Japan would also assist Jordan in boosting its tourism industry.

He said: "I had an opportunity to visit the Jordan Museum and I was deeply inspired. I believe the tourism industry holds immense promise in a country with such significant cultural heritage. Japan will make every effort to also provide cooperation and assistance in the areas of culture and tourism."