

Japan values Jordan's strategic regional role — Foreign minister

Tokyo reaffirms support for Kingdom's human resource development, economic growth, modernisation

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AMMAN — Jordan is “a cornerstone of peace and stability” in the Middle East, and Japan highly appreciates its role in the region, according to Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi.

“We will resolutely support Jordan in its efforts to maintain this important function,” Hayashi said in a written interview with The Jordan Times and Al Rai Arabic daily ahead of his scheduled visit to the Kingdom on Sunday.

Like Japan, Jordan is rich in human resources, with huge potential. Japan has been and will continue to be ready to share its experiences and contribute to Jordan's human resource development through capacity building and academic exchanges, the foreign minister said.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1954, Japan and Jordan have maintained friendly bilateral relations, including those between the imperial and royal families.

“Japan attaches full importance to Jordan and its political and economic stability, which contributes to the stability of the Middle East at large. That is why our two countries upgraded bilateral relations into a strategic partnership in 2018,” Hayashi said.

“In March I welcomed Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi to Tokyo, where we held the third bilateral strategic dialogue. The following month His Majesty King Abdullah visited Tokyo, where he discussed a wide range of bilateral and regional issues with Prime Minister Kishida,” the minister said.

“During my stay, I am keen to discuss the progress of our bilateral cooperation achieved through these past high-level visits and to reaffirm our commitment to further strengthening the ties between our two countries. I also look forward to discussing international affairs, including Russia's aggression against Ukraine, and key regional issues, not least the Middle East peace process, and to confirming our future cooperation on these issues,” he added.

Touching on regional issues Hayashi said that Japan is convinced that any progress towards comprehensive peace in the Middle East will greatly contribute to easing the tension that exists in the region, and will draw out the potential for regional prosperity to the maximum extent.

“While Japan hopes that a just, lasting and comprehensive peace will be realised at the earliest possible time, it is concerned about the current increase in tensions between Israel and Palestine and the prospect of a further deterioration in the situation,” he said.

“We have been calling on both sides to refrain from any unilateral action that could raise tensions and threaten the realisation of a ‘two-state solution’. We are carefully following the situation on the ground,” the foreign minister said.



Yoshimasa Hayashi

"The role of Jordan and the Hashemite Royal Family, as the Custodian of the holy sites in Jerusalem, is extremely important, and we appreciate Jordan's efforts to ease tensions, including through the five-party meeting involving Jordan, the United States, Egypt, Israel and Palestine," he added.

The minister also noted that Japan will continue to contribute to confidence-building among the parties involved in the Middle East peace process through its unique efforts, such as its "Corridors for Peace and Prosperity" initiative.

Regarding the issue of refugees, the foreign minister said: "We pay tribute to Jordan's role in accepting a large number of refugees and providing them with various types of support, including medical services and education. During my visit I am planning to visit a host community in order to grasp the reality of the refugee situation. It is our policy to strengthen support for countries hosting refugees, including Jordan."

"Looking at the region as a whole, there are emerging signs of momentum for intra-regional cooperation in the Middle East but it is also true that some countries and areas continue to suffer from long-term conflicts. In addition, many countries in the region, including Jordan, have been economically affected by Russia's aggression against Ukraine," Hayashi said.

Japan believes that the rule of law should be upheld everywhere in the world, and it is all the more important in the Middle East, where important waterways such as the Gulf of Aqaba and the Red Sea serve as crossroads for the transportation of energy, commodities and other goods, he continued.

"We would like to work with Jordan and other countries to promote maritime safety and freedom of navigation," he said.

Further elaborating on bilateral ties, the foreign minister pointed out that recently, there have been frequent high-level visits between Japan and Jordan, most notably the visit of His Majesty King Abdullah to Japan in April. "They testify to the close relationship between the two countries. As strategic partners, Japan and Jordan have been working on a wide range of areas, including economic cooperation and security," he said.

Japan will continue to support Jordan's efforts towards achieving modernisation as well as self-reliant and sustainable economic growth through measures including development policy loans and grant aid for the electricity, water and other sectors. "We hope that this assistance will contribute to the development of key elements of infrastructure that support Jordan's own endeavours, Hayashi said.

Moving on to trade ties, the minister highlighted that Japan is also eager to enhance business relations with Jordan. The Jordan-Japan Business Forum was successfully held in July in Amman, attended by many companies from both countries. There was lively discussion of business opportunities and the investment environment in Jordan as well as the activities of Japanese companies making use of their technology. Furthermore, Japan and Jordan signed a memorandum of cooperation in the digital field in July, he observed.

"In the area of security cooperation, both governments engage in regular politico-military consultations, and the Japan Self Defence Forces and the Jordanian Armed Forces have successfully collaborated executing exercises. Our two countries are also exchanging views on cyber security issues," Hayashi said.

Talking about Japan's efforts and cooperation with Middle Eastern countries to combat terrorism, the minister said that Japan has continuously provided technical assistance to the region's law enforcement authorities, particularly in counterterrorism and combatting transnational organised crime, through cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other international organisations.

"Terrorism and violent extremism remain serious threats to international peace and security. To combat terrorism and establish peace and stability in the Middle East region, a comprehensive approach is required. We also need to work collectively to prevent terrorists from benefiting financially from transnational organised crime, including drug trafficking, Hayashi said.

"Japan also appreciates Jordan's initiatives in the fight against terrorism. When I met with Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi, we concurred on deepening our cooperation on combating terrorism, including through the Aqaba Process, an important forum set up by His Majesty King Abdullah to develop both a shared understanding of the challenges posed by terrorism and for identifying solutions," he noted.

"As a committed partner in the global fight against terrorism, Japan will continue to work closely with Middle Eastern countries and support their efforts to build a sustainable society and establish peace, stability and prosperity," Hayashi added.

On a concluding note, the minister said that Japan and Jordan have nurtured friendly relations, building on various levels of interaction, from the close ties between the Imperial family and the Royal Family to people-to-people exchanges at the grassroots level. Today, "Jordan is an indispensable strategic partner for Japan in tackling a range of challenges both regionally and globally," Hayashi said.

"Next year marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Jordan. Based on our traditional friendship, I am confident that our two countries will succeed in further deepening our partnership and in expanding the horizon of our cooperation in a number of key fields," the minister added.