**Egypt is offered ¥43 billion loans during Abe visit**

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CAIRO – During talks with Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi in Cairo on Saturday, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe offered around ¥43 billion in loans to Egypt for airport and power grid projects.

Egypt was Abe’s first destination of his nearly weeklong Middle East tour.

Abe and agreed to enhance security dialogue by holding regular meetings between their diplomatic and defense authorities, and promote investment between the two countries, according to their joint statement issued after the talks.

Abe said Egypt’s prosperity will play an important part in making the Middle East “a vibrant and stabilized” region, according to a Japanese official.

El-Sissi was quoted as saying that economic development and stability are the wishes of the Egyptian people.

Abe asked el-Sissi to visit Japan by the end of the year, and Tokyo and Cairo will work to realize such a visit as el-Sissi accepted the offer, according to the official.

Prior to the talks, Abe said in his speech in Cairo that stability in the Middle East is “the foundation” of global peace and stability. Japan relies heavily on the region for oil.

The yen loans that were announced by Abe will be earmarked for several projects, including extension work at Borg El Arab Airport, located near Alexandria, Egypt’s second-largest city.

Abe also offered financial support for Egypt in strengthening its border controls as part of anti-Islamic State measures, according to the Japanese official.

The two leaders also affirmed coordination over the ongoing construction of the Grand Egyptian Museum, which is expected to be a major tourist draw when completed. Tokyo has extended loans to Egypt for the project.

On Friday, Abe held talks with Egyptian Prime Minister Ibrahim Mahlab to deepen bilateral ties. Mahlab expressed willingness to resume direct flights to Japan operated by EgyptAir, and Abe welcomed it.

Abe was scheduled to meet for talks with Jordan’s King Abdullah II in Amman on Sunday, part of Abe’s plans to reaffirm his collaboration with global leaders on efforts to cope with Islamic State group militants.

Building on their summit held last May, Abe is expected to discuss with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu deepening bilateral ties in a “comprehensive” manner during his two-day stay in Israel on Sunday and Monday, officials said.

After Israel Abe is scheduled to travel to the Palestinian territories for the last leg of his tour and sit down for talks with President Mahmoud Abbas on Tuesday.

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