

## Japan delegation says support resolute

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Former Japanese ministers of defense Shigeru Ishiba, left, and Yasukazu Hamada attend a news conference in Taipei yesterday.

**Photo: CNA**

Support for Taiwan in the Japanese Diet is bipartisan and would remain unchanged after the assassination of former Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe, a visiting delegation of Japanese lawmakers told a news conference in Taipei yesterday.

The Japanese parliament recognizes the importance of Japan-Taiwan relations, and has shown bipartisan sympathy and support for Taiwan, said former Japanese minister of defense Shigeru Ishiba, who led the four-member delegation to Taiwan for a four-day visit.

The efforts to further develop and promote bilateral relations are to continue after Abe's sudden death, added Ishiba, who was Japan's defense minister from 2007 to 2008.

Abe died on July 8 at the age of 67, hours after being shot twice by a man using a makeshift shotgun during an election campaign event on a street in Nara, near Osaka.

The longest-serving Japanese prime minister was viewed by many in Taiwan as a staunch supporter of the nation.

Echoing Ishiba's views, former deputy minister of defense Akihisa Nakashima said that promoting Japan's ties with Taiwan had never relied solely on the late former prime minister, but that it was the effort of Diet members across party lines.

The delegation, which consists of lawmakers focusing on defense affairs, visited Taiwan to discuss with officials how the two sides could collaborate on security matters, Nakashima said.

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Some European nations had swiftly increased their engagements with Taiwan in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Nakashima said, adding that Japan should make similar efforts to elevate its relations with Taipei.

The delegation, which also includes former Japanese minister of national defense Yasukazu Hamada and Diet member Takayuki Shimizu, has since their arrival on Wednesday met with President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文), Vice President William Lai (賴清德), Premier Su Tseng-chang (蘇貞昌) and Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Chairman Eric Chu (朱立倫).

Asked what security cooperation details were discussed with Taiwanese officials, Ishiba declined to comment, citing confidentiality, but added that the visit provided the delegation with a better understanding of the Taiwanese military's command and control operations.

The delegation hopes that these insights can contribute to developing Japanese security policy, Ishiba added.

While Japan has the responsibility to contribute to peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region, whether its defense forces should intervene in the event of a regional conflict remains to be discussed in the country, Ishiba said.

The delegation ended the trip and left for Japan yesterday.

The news conference followed a visit by the delegation to former president Lee Teng-hui's (李登輝) grave at a New Taipei City military cemetery, where the delegates paid their respects to Lee, who died two years ago.

They were accompanied by ambassador-at-large for digital New Southbound Policy initiatives Lin Chia-lung (林錫山), according to the Lee Teng-hui Foundation.

Lin is also the Democratic Progressive Party's New Taipei City mayoral candidate in

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November's local elections.

Lee, Taiwan's first popularly elected president, who passed away at the age of 97, spoke fluent Japanese and was known for his Japan-friendly views.

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