



Jordan's King Abdullah II inspecting a guard of honour with President Halimah Yacob at the Istana yesterday. This is the King's third state visit to Singapore. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

Singapore, Jordan look forward to deeper cooperation

Pacts on bilateral consultation, water resource management signed

Linette Lai
Political Correspondent

As small countries with limited resources, both Singapore and Jordan must remain nimble to deal with external challenges, President Halimah Yacob said yesterday during a state banquet held in honour of King Abdullah II of Jordan.

And Singapore looks forward to working with Jordan to weave more threads of cooperation into their tapestry of relations, she added.

The formal dinner at the Istana rounded off the King's two-day state visit to Singapore, during which both countries inked a pact to set up a bilateral consultation mechanism to enhance communication between their officials.

A second agreement on water resource management was also signed by Jordan's Ministry of Water and Irrigation and Singapore's Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources. It will promote cooperation in areas like water reuse, desalination and waste-water treatment.

At last night's banquet, the King recounted how the Singapore-Jordan relationship goes back to when Singapore first became independent in 1965. Jordan was one of four countries to sponsor the fledgling nation's membership application to the United Nations.

"We have new opportunities and new pages we can write that will bring us much closer together," King Abdullah said.

He added: "My people tell me that this is the best-organised exchange

that they have had for any country in quite a long time."

The King was on his third state visit to Singapore. The earlier visits were in 2001 and 2014. He was accompanied by his chief royal councillor and brother, Prince Hashim Bin Al Hussein, his chief adviser on religious cultural affairs and personal envoy, Prince Ghazi Bin Muhammad, and a high-level official delegation.

In her speech last night, Madam Halimah spoke warmly of the King's role in promoting religious moderation and the importance of interfaith dialogue and tolerance.

"I am confident that your wise words will have a positive and lasting impact, not just in our respective regions, but also in other parts of the world," she said.

The King had delivered the keynote speech at the inaugural International Conference on Cohesive Societies yesterday morning, during which he stressed the need for people and nations to push back against the attack on interfaith harmony, mutual respect and trust. Every global challenge in the 21st century demands that countries and people resist hatred and exclusion, he said.

The conference, which started on Wednesday and ends today, aims to promote understanding between different communities.

Madam Halimah added at the dinner: "In an increasingly polarised world where lines are drawn along ethnic, religious and other identities, we need strong voices of reason and advocates of peace among global leaders to protect our world from disintegrating. Your Majesty

is one such voice."

Noting that peace and stability in the Middle East "have never been of greater importance", the President commended the King for being a strong advocate for peaceful dialogue and cooperation for Jordan and the entire region.

"Your efforts in offering a safe haven to the millions fleeing conflict have been globally recognised," she said, congratulating him on being awarded the Lamp of Peace prize earlier this year.

The King received the top Catholic award in March for promoting human rights, interfaith dialogue and Middle East peace, and for taking in Syrian refugees fleeing the conflict in their country.

Yesterday evening, the King received a formal welcome ceremony at the Istana, and paid Madam Halimah a courtesy call.

He also met Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. Both leaders discussed developments in the Middle East and exchanged views on ways to strengthen economic links between Jordan and Singapore, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) said in a statement yesterday.

"They also reaffirmed the strong bilateral cooperation in many areas, including religious education and efforts to fight radicalisation," MFA said.

Earlier in the day, the King met business leaders at a roundtable organised by the Singapore Business Federation and Enterprise Singapore.

Madam Halimah expressed her hope that the forum will "pave the



Above: Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong meeting King Abdullah at the Istana. They reaffirmed the strong bilateral cooperation in many areas. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

Below: Nanyang Technological University president Subra Suresh (right) giving King Abdullah and his delegation a briefing at the university yesterday. With them was Environment and Water Resources Minister and Minister-in-charge of Muslim Affairs Masagos Zulkifli (left). PHOTO: NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY



way for more businesses to collaborate with each other, and help strengthen economic links and promote mutual prosperity of our two countries".

The King also visited Nanyang Technological University to learn

more about its programmes and toured its facilities, including the Singapore Centre for 3D Printing and Air Traffic Management Research Institute.

linettel@sph.com.sg

VOICE OF REASON

In an increasingly polarised world where lines are drawn along ethnic, religious and other identities, we need strong voices of reason and advocates of peace among global leaders to protect our world from disintegrating. Your Majesty is one such voice.



PRESIDENT HALIMAH YACOB, on the role of Jordan's King Abdullah II in promoting understanding between different communities.

EFFORTS FOR PEACE

Your efforts in offering a safe haven to the millions fleeing conflict have been globally recognised.



PRESIDENT HALIMAH, congratulating the King on being awarded the Lamp of Peace prize earlier this year.