

Iraq to Import 250 Trucks from Brazil. Cars Will Follow

Contributed by Marina Sarruf
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Iraq is negotiating the purchase of 250 trucks from the Mercedes-Benz plant in São Bernardo do Campo, in the Greater São Paulo, Brazil. The information was disclosed by the Iraqi minister of Industry, Fawzi Hariri.

Said the official who met with representatives of the multinational company: "This is an initial figure, and as soon as we start taking the first steps, we may increase that figure."

Further on, the Iraqi government plans on having a production line in the Arab country, and on importing completely knocked-down (CKD) kits to be assembled in Iraq.

"This will be a long-term process, one that should continue for over 30 years," said Hariri, who believes that production in the country should total 2,000 units per year. "It is a very positive strategy, both for the Brazilian employees and for those who will work in Iraq in the future," he added.

According to the minister, negotiations for importing the first truck units should be concluded by late July. "The project with Mercedes-Benz in São Bernardo do Campo should generate an annual turnover of between US\$ 150 million and US\$ 200 million," claimed Hariri. In addition to trucks, the minister also showed interest in importing Brazilian automobiles, among them those of Volkswagen.

In the 1980s, Volkswagen Brazil exported to Iraq the four-door version of the Passat model, which can still be seen in the country nowadays. "That was a very important moment for both Brazil and Iraq, and that is why we are back, to resume the work that was started in the past," claimed the minister.

Welcomed by the mayor of São Bernardo do Campo, Luiz Marinho, Hariri spoke of business opportunities in his country to more than 100 local businessmen. The sectors that the minister highlighted as potential targets for investment in the country include industries, tourism, transport, services and oil.

"Several developed, industrialized countries are investing in Iraq, mainly because we have laws to encourage investors," he said.

Hariri also said that in August, the Iraqi government should send its minister of Investment to Brazil to discuss opportunities in the country. According to him, over the last 5 years, the country's economy remained stable, with an annual inflation rate of 9%.

After the minister's visit, Marinho stated that he is interested in organizing a trade mission of businessmen from São Bernardo do Campo to Iraq. "Iraq is now a buyer country, and we are capable of offering several opportunities," said the

mayor.

Today, the minister will head to Vitória, the capital of the state of Espírito Santo, seeking foodstuffs. On Friday, he will travel to Florianópolis, capital of Santa Catarina, where he should attend a seminar promoted with the support of the Federation of Industries of the State of Santa Catarina (Fiesc).

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