

Saudi Students Visit USP, Brazil's Leading University, and Vow Cooperation

Contributed by Marina Sarruf
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The studies center and Arabic laboratory at the University of São Paulo (USP), which are part of the oriental languages department at the School of Philosophy, Languages and Human Sciences (FFLCH), caused an impression on a group of 18 Saudi college students.

They are visiting Brazil on an exchange experience, organized by the Saudi Science Club. The school was presented to the students Monday, August 15, by the professor Helmi Mohammed Ibraim Nasr, former head of the department and director at the Arab Brazilian Chamber of Commerce (CCAB). The professor welcomed each one of the youngsters.

"I thought it was very nice to see that there is an Arabic course in Brazil, as it is a culture that is very distant from here," stated the medicine student, Saud H. Aldobyan.

Professor Helmi Nast explained that the Arabic laboratory, which has equipments for the students to learn the language, is the result of a donation of US\$ 40,000 made by the Saudi royal family in 1980.

The laboratory takes the name of the king Abdul Aziz Al Saud, founder of the dynasty that governs Saudi Arabia. The students were surprised to find out about the homage. "I believe this visit will yield good results," said Nasr.

According to Abdulhafeez M. Ameen, executive director at the Science Club, the entity would like to support the course.

"When I get back to Saudi Arabia I will see with the universities what can be done to cooperate. I plan to send books of history, geography, and other areas for the course," he stated.

He also said he would like to make more partnerships. "We are here to make a cultural bridge between Brazil and Saudi Arabia," he added.

During the presentation of the school of languages, Nasr and Ameen also talked about the possibility of bringing teachers from the Arab country to Brazil. According to Nasr, there are only a few teachers who are capable of teaching the Arab language at the university. "They promised to do everything to help us," he said.

More Visits

In the morning, the students visited the Institute for Technological Research (IPT) of the State of São Paulo, also related to USP, where they saw many laboratories, such as for flowing and measuring liquids, gases, fuels and lubricants and for combustion and gasification, as well as a test tank, where the technicians test ship models and the stability of oil platforms, and a wind tunnel.

Lastly, the group visited the television station TV Bandeirantes, where they saw the television and radio studios. For network's presidency advisor, Ricardo Ares, the Saudi's visit is reason for pride and joy for the Bandeirantes group, as the network's founders, the Saad family, are Arab descendants. "This visit adds value to Band," he said.

During the visits the youngsters did not miss observing the habits of their country and religion, Islamism. After the visit to FFLCH, professor Helmi Nasr made available an empty classroom where the students could pray.

They also had the opportunity of getting to know some of the Brazilian flavors. At the university restaurant in USP, the youngsters had rice, beef, chicken stroganoff, potato fries and salad for lunch, oranges and watermelon for desert.

The day's evaluation was positive. "We could not imagine people here would be so friendly and polite to foreigners. Even not knowing our language, everybody is nice and tries to help," stated Shdi A Tamur, medicine student.

University Students

The 18 Saudi pupils are the best students of medicine, electric, electronic and aeronautic engineering from seven universities in Saudi Arabia. According to Tamur, the exchange experience to Brazil is sponsored by private companies in the country, and at their return the students must present a report on what they saw.

According to him, all universities in Saudi Arabia are state owned and the students also receive a monthly allowance of US\$ 200 to help with costs. The youngsters arrived in Brazil on Friday, August 12.

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