

Saudi Mission Looks for Raw Material in Brazil

Contributed by Alexandre Rocha
Friday, 03 February 2006

During their visit to Brazil, the executives of three great state-owned companies of Saudi Arabia started their moves for the formation of partnerships with Brazilian companies.

The aim is to make joint investments to ensure the supply of raw materials to the Saudi steelworks sector, and of petrochemical products to the Brazilian industry. These investments may be made both in operations in the Arab country, and in Brazil.

Forming the Saudi delegation are Abdallah Dabbagh, president of the Saudi Arabian Mining Company (Maaden); Homood Al-Tuwajiri, vice president of the Saudi Arabian Basic Industries Corporation (Sabic), which acts in the area of petrochemicals, fertilizers and steelworks; and Abdulwahab Al-Sadoun, director of the investments authority in the Arab country, Sagia.

They have already been to Rio de Janeiro, Brasília and São Paulo and visited companies such as Unipar, in the petrochemical sector, oil giant Petrobras, mining company Vale do Rio Doce, the Brazilian Development Bank (BNDES) and the Bank of Brazil.

Thursday, February 2, Al-Tuwajiri and Al-Sadoun had meetings at the petrochemical company Braskem and the trading company Comexport, one of the largest in Brazil.

Their visit is in response to two missions the Brazilian Foreign Office (Itamaraty) organized to Saudi Arabia and other countries in the region last year, which counted on the participation of directors of the Arab Brazilian Chamber of Commerce.

"At Braskem they analyzed the possibilities of technological cooperation. The company has great know-how in the petrochemical sector and they were impressed," said Rodrigo de Azeredo Santos, deputy head at the trade promotion operations division at the Itamaraty, the Brazilian foreign office, who is accompanying the Saudis. At Comexport the topic was the possible sales of Saudi fertilizers to Brazil.

Al-Tuwajiri and Al-Sadoun visited the headquarters of the Chamber in São Paulo and were hosted by the entity's president, Antonio Sarkis Jr., the secretary general, Michel Alaby, the international relations vice president, Helmi Mohammed Ibraim Nasr, and the director, Toufic Sleiman. They were accompanied by the chargé d'affaires at the Saudi embassy in Brasília, Abdallah ALOWAIFER.

"Now mission exchanges like this one will become an all the time greater tradition," said Sarkis. The Saudi executives will stay in Brazil until Saturday. Today they will go to Porto Alegre, city in the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul. "They are feeling very optimistic with the journey's results", he added.

In the meeting, Al-Sadoun spoke, amongst other things, of the work done by Sagia, which regulates the foreign investments in the country. "With Saudi Arabia entering the World Trade Organization (WTO), some sectors will be opened, like steel, aluminum and the petrochemical industry," said Alaby.

Education

Another topic discussed was the exchange in the education area, especially concerning teaching languages. "Great entrepreneurs from Saudi Arabia are interested in helping promote the Arab language," said Sarkis.

Al-Sadoun received as a gift a copy of the Arabic-Portuguese dictionary elaborated by professor Helmi Nasr, of the University of São Paulo (USP), and published by the Chamber.

One of the ideas in this field is to take Brazilian youngsters to see the Arab country, following the example of the group of Saudi students that was in Brazil in 2005, trip organized by the Saudi Science Club and the Arab Chamber.

"The Chamber has committed to preparing a study to take the matter forward," stated Sarkis. "Teaching the language is a way towards business and is important also so that trade doesn't become the only reason for strengthening the ties," he added.

During the meeting, the Arab Chamber directors made also a presentation on the entity's activities and objective, that of bringing Brazil and the Arab countries closer, economically and culturally.

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