
SAUDI ARABIA AND IRAQ MOVE TO UPGRADE RELATIONS

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Dubai: Iraq and Saudi Arabia are setting up a coordination council to upgrade strategic ties, a joint statement said on Tuesday, as part of an attempt to heal troubled relations between the Arab neighbours.

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al Abadi met with Saudi King Salman a day earlier on the first leg of a Middle East tour that will also include Iran and Kuwait.

The countries agreed to establish a coordination council to upgrade relations to the hoped for strategic level and open new horizons for cooperation in different fields, said the statement carried by the official Saudi Press Agency.

In April, Gulf News broke the story that the two countries planned to set up a coordination council.

In an exclusive interview, Ahmad Jamal, the spokesman for the Iraqi foreign ministry, said the two countries planned to boost cooperation in various sectors including oil, economy, trade, intelligence and counter-terrorism.

The statement on Tuesday said the two countries had achieved a quantum leap in bilateral relations and stressed the importance of further official visits.

Saudi Arabia reopened its embassy in Baghdad in 2015 following a 25-year break after Iraq invaded Kuwait under late Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

After the US, under former president George W. Bush, ousted Saddam from power, Iraq experienced a power vacuum which Iran took advantage of and began interfering in the countrys domestic affairs.

Arab states have long-complained of Iranian meddling in their affairs.

In the Gulf News interview, Jamal said that his country was not under the influence of Iran and promised Iraq will never be Irans backyard.

In February this year, Saudi Foreign Minister Adel Al Jubeir made a rare visit to Baghdad which helped break the ice between the two countries.

King Salman and Al Abadi then met in March on the sidelines of an Arab summit.

Kaynak/Source: