
SAUDI ARABIA ACTIVATES SHIPPING LINE WITH IRAQ: NEWSPAPER

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Baghdad (IraqiNews.com) Saudi Arabia has started the operation of a maritime line with Iraq's Um Kasr port to boost inter-trade over the next period, a press report said on Tuesday as ties between the two governments continue to better.

Saudi newspaper Okaz said the measure comes in line with the formation of the joint cooperation committee launched in August, and as part of the kingdom's 2030 development strategy.

The newspaper explained that journeys through the line already began early March, adding that the King Abdul-Aziz Port is eager to improve that line in coordination with a number of shipping companies. The port's administration, the newspaper said, aims at turning Dammam Port into a logistic terminal for massive ships using that direct maritime line.

Relations between Sunni-ruled Saudi Arabia and the Shia-dominated Iraqi government have been tense over the past few years due to Saudi Arabia's opposition to the involvement of Iraqi Shia paramilitary forces in the fight against Islamic State militants. Saudi Arabia has always been irritated by the influence of Shia Iran, its arch regional enemy, over Iraqi politics.

But the past year saw an obvious rapprochement between both countries, with top-level officials exchanging visits and expressing eagerness to boost political, security and economic cooperation.

Last year, both countries established a joint coordination council to boost ties on all levels.

Last week, both countries signed an aviation agreement.

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