
IRAQ TO JOIN CHINA'S BELT AND ROAD PROJECT

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BEIJING

Iraq will join China's signature Belt and Road infrastructure investment project, the country's prime minister said Monday (Sep 23) in Beijing.

Adel Abdel Mahdi made the announcement in a meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping during a state visit.

"Iraq has gone through war and civil strife and is grateful to China for its valuable support," said Mahdi, in comments broadcast on Chinese state media outlet CCTV.

"Iraq is willing to work together in the 'One Belt, One Road' framework," he added.

Xi said that the two countries would cooperate on oil and infrastructure projects.

"China would like, from a new starting point together with Iraq, to push forward the China-Iraq strategic partnership," said Xi.

Trade last year between China and Iraq was more than \$30 billion, according to state news agency Xinhua.

Beijing is Baghdad's biggest trade partner, while Iraq is China's second biggest oil supplier.

The Belt and Road Initiative is a massive global network of ports, railways, roads and industrial parks spanning Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Europe, which will see trillions invested in new infrastructure.

It has faced criticism for swaddling poor nations with crippling debt and been eyed with suspicion by Washington, which sees it as an attempt by China to grow its influence in the region.

Source: AFP/nh

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