

News Highlights



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Conference paves the way for better roads

Public Works and Transport Minister Ghazi Aridi said that poorly-maintained roads in Lebanon are having a negative impact on the safety of Lebanese citizens.

"The great gap that exists between theory and practice when it comes to the construction of proper roads could be filled by follow-up and seriousness in work," he said. "Instead negative practices [prevail] and this is not only affecting citizens' safety but is also leading to the mismanagement of public funds."



Aridi: Poorly-maintained roads are having a negative impact on the safety of Lebanese citizens

Aridi's remarks came during the Middle East Society of Asphalt Technologies (MESAT) conference held at Le Bristol Hotel in Beirut between July 5 and 8, 2010. Organized by the American University of Beirut (AUB) and the University of Balamand, the conference aimed at fostering sharing of scientific and engineering knowledge about asphalt materials and roads. Its objective is to advocate best practices in the research, publication, and building of asphalt roads in addition to bridging the gap between research and practice.

MESAT is an association of academics, practitioners and managers of asphalt roads serving as a technical forum to share knowledge and develop effective methods for the delivery and maintenance of asphalt roads in the Middle East.



The conference aimed at fostering sharing of scientific and engineering knowledge about asphalt

Not only does Lebanon suffer from a lack of financial resources for the implementation of infrastructure projects but it also needs to finance the maintenance of these projects following their implementation, said Aridi.

The financial cost of not implementing road projects in Lebanon is very high, he added. "To give you an example, the

Arab highway linking Beirut with the factory area would have cost much less if it was implemented years ago," he said. "The part of the project that is being implemented today will cost the amount that would have been needed to implement the whole project years ago."

Moreover, Aridi pledged that the ministry would take into consideration the recommendations made by the conference.

Meanwhile, Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture at AUB Ibrahim Hajj underlined the importance of cooperation between governments and researchers in the aim of actually implementing the findings they discover.

"I know that governments in advanced countries listen to scientists and implement their findings and that is why they have better roads than we have in this part of the world," he said. "I hope that this takes place in Lebanon as well."

Meanwhile, Professor Hussein Bahia from the University of



Winsconsin highlighted the benefits of investing in infrastructure.

Hajj underlined the importance of cooperation between governments and researchers

"Improvement of the quality of the roads network leads to higher rates of economic growth and better income distribution, according to the World Bank," he said.

Bahia also noted that improving the technology of bitumen, the material making up 90 percent of roads, would lead to better roads and better lives in the Middle East. Moreover, he warned against half-measures and quick fixes, noting that countries that have built roads quickly did not get a return on their investment.

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