

Transport minister highlights Lebanon's poor roads and infrastructure

ARIDI URGES FOLLOW-UP AND SERIOUSNESS IN ADDRESSING 'DISASTROUS' SITUATION

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BEIRUT: Public Works and Transport Minister Ghazi Aridi said Monday Lebanon is suffering from a lack of proper roads which is negatively affecting the safety of Lebanese citizens.

"Roads situation in Lebanon is disastrous and the great gap that exists between theory and practice could be filled by follow up and seriousness in work," he said. "However, it is being unfortunately filled with

negative practices and this is not only affecting the citizens' safety but it is also leading to the mismanagement of the government's general directorates."

Aridi's remarks came during the Middle East Society of Asphalt Technologies (MESAT) conference held at Le Bristol Hotel in Beirut. The conference, organized by the American University of Beirut and the University Of Balamand, aimed at fostering sharing of scientific and engineering knowledge about asphalt materials and

roads. Its objective is to advocate the 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 Mideast. MESAT enjoys close ties with asphalt researchers in North America and Europe and

is, thus, part of a global network of scientific societies working to create an environmentally friendly and sustainable asphalt road infrastructure.

Aridi said the financial cost of not implementing road projects in Lebanon is very high. "To confirm what I am saying I would like to tell you that the Arab highway linking Beirut with the factory area would have cost much less if it was implemented years ago," he said. "Part of the project is being implemented today and this part will cost the

amount it would have been needed to implement the whole project years ago."

Aridi added that financing is needed to implement such projects in Lebanon. "The country is also facing a problem because of the lack in financing of the maintenance of this infrastructure following the implementation of needed projects," he said.

He also expressed the willingness of the ministry to take into account the results that will be issued at the end of the conference. "We need to use the

expertise and skills of people participating in this conference to be better able to manage the public sector."

For his part, Professor Hussein Bahia from the University of Wiconsin said that the improvement of infrastructure is key to sustainable economic growth and essential for mitigating poverty. "Improvement of the quality of roads network leads to higher rates of economic growth and better income distribution, according to the World Bank," he said.



Aridi: "The road situation in Lebanon is disastrous."

Meanwhile, Dean Ibrahim Hajj from the American University of Beirut said that it is of utmost importance for governments to work in cooperation with researchers to implement the findings that they discover so that report papers are translated into action.