

Brazil's Highways Are a Disaster, Admits Government

Contributed by Liésio Pereira
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The investments made on Brazil's highways over the past 12 years were mere maintenance, "stopgaps," said the Minister of Transportation, Alfredo Nascimento, talking in São Paulo.

"Highways have an average life span of 12 years. Ours are 40-50 years old and did not receive the treatment they should have received," he commented.

According to Nascimento, approximately 5 thousand kilometers of highway were restored last year, "which is very little, when you have 58 thousand."

With the resources it has available, the government expects to restore another 14 thousand kilometers this year.

"But restore in the sense of rebuilding the road, since the bed and understructure of these highways have been damaged with the passage of time, and you practically have to redo them."

The Minister participated, yesterday, in the closing session of the II Logistics Seminar, organized by the Federation of Industries of the State of São Paulo (Fiesp) during the South America Intermodal fair.

Nascimento referred to the condition of Brazilian highways to explain the government's conception of investments in infrastructure.

He acknowledged that these investments, despite being "real," are insufficient, because a lot of time must be recouped.

"They are insufficient, because, in order to work with infrastructure, time is required. You can't restore in one year what was neglected for 15 years; there is no way," he said.

The Minister emphasized that infrastructural problems affect the country's economy as a whole, because they make Brazilian products more expensive. According to him, the entire government shares this assessment.

"If you didn't have the 'bottlenecks' that exist today in our infrastructure, the cost of our products would certainly be much cheaper abroad. Transportation costs are very significant, when one doesn't provide good logistical conditions," he explained.

"The priority of investment in infrastructure is not just the vision of the Minister of Transportation, it is the vision of the economic area of the Administration and of the President of the Republic himself, who discusses it with me almost daily," he affirmed.

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