

## Integration Bridge Opens Pacific Ocean for Brazil

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The presidents of Peru and Brazil, Alejandro Toledo and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, on Saturday, January 21, inaugurated the new Integration Bridge which spans their common border and opens a Pacific Ocean trade route for Brazil.

The 300-meter (984-foot) Integration Bridge will join the cities of Iñapari in Peru and Assis in Brazil. It cost 8 million reais (US\$ 4.8 million) and was financed by the Acre state government and the federal government of Brazil.

On the Pacific Ocean, Brazilians will be able to ship their products from the Peruvian ports of Ilo, Maratani and San Juan.

For the Brazilian President, dedication to South American integration signifies a "change of direction" in a region that for many years lived with its head in Europe and the United States.

Lula said that history will certainly judge that his government together with those of Peru, Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Uruguay and Chile "have worked more for integration than was done in a century."

"If we keep on working for integration, the 21st century will be the century of South America and of Latin America," Lula said.

Peru wants to sell on the Brazilian market such products as cotton fabrics and yarn, fresh and canned artichokes, chili peppers, corn, unusual fruits like prickly pear, passion fruit and eggfruit, as well as olives, asparagus, fish and seafoods.

Meanwhile companies in Acre state want to ship to the Andean nation cement, iron, stone, as well as industrial and manufactured goods.

Toledo told Lula that "the bridge may be built of iron and cement, but inside it are the heart and soul of our zeal for South American integration."

The Peruvian president, whose term in office ends next July, announced that as of next week Brazilians can travel to Peru without using a passport.

The interoceanic highway will cost approximately US\$ 810 million, but estimates say it will increase Peru's gross national product (GNP) by approximately 1.5 percent when it is fully functioning.

The immense highway will benefit Peru's southern region and its population of more than 5 million inhabitants.

The road will start from the Peruvian ports of Ilo and Matarani, will pass through Cuzco and Puno to Iñapari on the Brazil border, from where Integration Bridge will provide access to Assis, Brazilian capital Brasília, Rio Branco, Porto Velho, Cuiabá and the port of Santos on the Atlantic Ocean, an area with a population of more than 6.5 million.

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