

Manaus Free Zone Gets a Lift, But Rest of Brazil Lags

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The new cargo terminal at Eduardo Gomes International Airport in Manaus, capital of the northern Brazilian state of Amazonas, to be inaugurated today (December 14) by Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, is going to help ease transport of products produced in Manaus Free Zone, in the northern Brazilian state of Amazonas, for the Brazilian and foreign market.

"The new terminal will increase the capacity installed at the airport and, parting from the principle that there should be modernization of operations, there should also be an operational gain for the Brazilian Airport Infrastructure Company (Infraero) and for users of the system.

"There will also be a gain in terms of reduction of the cargo storage time, and with the new team, the workers there will be better trained," stated the president of the Center of Industries of the State of Amazonas (Cieam), Mauricio Loureiro.

The opening of Cargo Terminal III (Teca III) takes place at a moment in which production at the industrial hub in Manaus is breaking records.

In September, according to the most recent statistics by the Manaus Free Zone Superintendence (Suframa), the companies installed in the city had revenues of US\$ 1.26 billion, the best monthly result in the history of the hub.

Between January and September, revenues of companies in the hub reached US\$ 9.5 billion, an increase of 30.7% with regard to the same period in 2003.

According to Loureiro, company revenues should reach the end of the year at between US\$ 13.5 billion and US\$ 14 billion, against US\$ 10.5 billion last year.

In all, according to Loureiro, 520 domestic and foreign companies that have received tax incentives from the federal and state government are installed in the region.

Up to September, they employed 81,400 people, according to the Suframa. In the evaluation of the president of the Cieam, this figure should reach 85,000 up to the end of the year, against 67,500 in December 2003.

2005 Production Already Sold

The sectors that most grew, according to Loureiro, were the mobile telephone, motorcycle and bicycle, plastics and electronic components. "We sold 3 million DVD players this year," he said.

In the case of the plastics sector, he added that the local factories already have almost their entire production for 2005 sold.

"This shows that businessmen are optimistic with regard to the economy in 2005," he declared.

But while production increases, logistics is not following at the same speed.

"The Free Zone has grown very much this year, more than the transport infrastructure, which is not coping with the demand," stated Loureiro.

According to him, the cost of transport from Manaus to the large consumer centers in the country, like São Paulo, in the southeast, is similar to international freight. Products made in the region are transported by airplane, ship or by highway and waterway.

Although he believes that the new aerial terminal is going to help ease transport in the region, Loureiro warns that the federal government has to make a larger number of employees available at organizations like the Revenues Service, the National Health Surveillance Agency (Anvisa) and the Ministry of Agriculture to work at the site.

Capacity

According to an article by Nelson Motta, from Agência Brasil, the president of the Infraero, Carlos Wilson, stated that cargo throughput at Manaus international airport should grow by 3,000 tons a month to 12,000 tons.

The airport already has Terminal I, for exports and arrival of domestic cargo, and Terminal II, used for imports, removal and transit.

Still according to Agência Brasil, the superintendent of infraero in Manaus, Tércio Ivan de Barros, stated that operations at the new terminal should generate another 5,000 jobs, direct and indirect.

According to Barros, the new installations will have an area of 13,600 square meters and, at 12 meters in height, the warehouse will have "the largest clearance of all terminals" in Brazil," even exceeding that of the warehouses in Guarulhos and Campinas airports, in São Paulo.

The storage capacity should reach 1 million tons. According to Loureiro, the warehouse is 50 meters wide by 124 meters long and has installations for the offices of the organizations that operate in the sector.

In all, the investment in modernization of Manaus airport should be around US\$ 46.9 million. According to Loureiro, US\$ 12.6 million was invested in the construction of the new terminal and the rest will be used in the purchase of new equipment and in the redoing of the oldest installations.

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