

Agri dep't launches infra monitoring office

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said it established a compliance unit to oversee its newly assumed infrastructure responsibilities, particularly for farm-to-market roads (FMRs), which the DA is taking over from the Department of Public Works and Highways next year.

The Social and Environmental Safeguards (SES) Unit, created through De-

partment Order 22, series of 2025, will ensure that DA infrastructure projects are compliant with national regulations and development-partner requirements.

“The recent controversy surrounding flood control projects underscores why we need a strong safeguards system. We cannot afford gray areas or blind spots. This watchdog unit ensures that every DA project is

transparent, accountable, and fully aligned with environmental and social standards,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said in a statement.

The SES will deploy safeguard officers to oversee both central-government and regional projects, according to the DA.

The unit will also work with the Department of Environment and Natural

Resources and the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, as well as development partners like the World Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

The DA's national FMR roadmap identifies the need for 131,000 kilometers of rural roads, more than 60,000 kilometers of which remain unbuilt. The DA said

the FMRs are needed to lower transport costs and reduce post-harvest losses.

Beyond FMRs, the DA said it aims to improve agricultural infrastructure like food hubs, cold storage facilities and rice mills. It said France has pledged support for around 300 steel bridges in 52 provinces to improve connectivity to remote farms. — **Vonn Andrei E. Villamiel**

PHL makes progress on water security, but state of aquatic ecosystems cited as concern

THE PHILIPPINES significantly improved the state of its water security over the last 12 years, the decline in aquatic ecosystems remains a concern, according to the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

In the Asia Water Development Outlook (AWDO) 2025, the Philippines' score improved 10.2

points on the National Water Security Index between 2013 and 2025. The index grades on a 100-point scale.

“(The Philippines is) one of the better performers in Southeast Asia in the last decade or so,” Vivek Raman, principal urban development specialist at ADB, said in a virtual briefing.

— **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

FULL STORY



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PHL, Hungary wrap up joint commission meetings

THE PHILIPPINES and Hungary recently concluded the 7th Session of the Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation (JCEC) in Budapest, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said.

“The JCEC took stock of co-operation initiatives in trade, education, agriculture, labor mobility, energy, science and technology, business partnerships, and people-to-people

exchange,” the DTI's Bureau of International Trade Relations said in a social media post.

The JCEC was led by Philippine Trade Undersecretary Allan B. Gepty and Hungarian Deputy Minister and Parliamentary State Secretary Levente Magyar.

Aside from the JCEC, Mr. Gepty also participated in the Hungary-Philippines Business Forum, where Philippine and

Hungarian businesses engaged in matching sessions.

Mr. Magyar described Hungary's partnership with the Philippines as strategically important, citing recent economic successes.

“Hungarian agricultural exports to the Philippines increased seven times in the last few years,” he said on Facebook.

“Hungary employs the highest number of Filipino workers

in the European Union — in jobs not filled by Hungarians — who play an important role in strengthening the domestic economy,” he added.

According to Tradeline Philippines, Hungary exported \$31.7 million worth of goods to the Philippines last year, with \$93.9 million worth of Philippine goods going the other way.

— **Justine Irish D. Tabile**



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