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Philippines approves largest PRDP Road Project in Zambales

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The Department of Agriculture has approved a major infrastructure project worth Rs 108 crore (â?±727 million) under the Philippine Rural Development Project (PRDP), aimed at improving connectivity to upland agricultural communities in Zambales.

Cleared by the Central Luzon Project Advisory Board, the 26-kilometre farm-to-market road (FMR) linking Barangay Baloganon to Sitio Coto in Barangay Taltal is being positioned as a transformative intervention to unlock agricultural growth in the region. The project, which includes the construction of 11 bridges, will be the longest and most capital-intensive subproject under the World Bank-supported PRDP Scale-Up programme.

Designed to address long-standing accessibility challenges, the project is expected to directly benefit over 1,500 mango and rice farmers, along with around 4,500 households in the area. Poor road conditions have historically limited mobility, with travel along the stretch taking up to two hours and public transport restricted to just a couple of trips daily.

The proposed upgrade includes concreting of deteriorated sections, strengthening drainage infrastructure and replacing ageing steel bridges, with the aim of ensuring year-round access, particularly during adverse weather conditions.

Officials said the project underwent extensive feasibility assessment and inter-agency review to ensure compliance with technical, economic, environmental and social safeguards before securing approval. The road itself dates back to the mining era, when it supported operations that produced around 15 million metric tonnes of chromite, but has since deteriorated following the closure of mining activity.

Local authorities indicated that project implementation could begin as early as September or October this year, subject to procedural clearances, including a â??no objectionâ?• certification from the World Bank, followed by procurement, bidding and contract award stages.

The PRDP is a flagship programme of the Philippine government, aimed at building a climate-resilient and market-oriented agri-fishery sector. The ongoing Scale-Up phase, launched in 2023 with funding of around Rs 3,600 crore, seeks to expand rural infrastructure and enterprise development to enhance farm productivity, improve market access and raise rural incomes.

Upon completion, the Zambales FMR project is expected to significantly reduce travel time and logistics costs, enabling farmers to transport produce more efficiently and strengthening the agricultural value chain in the region.