

Ministries discuss road research, training

HÀ NỘI — Officials from the Ministry of Transport (MoT) and Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) met on Wednesday to discuss comprehensive co-operation on applying the latest research in sustainable road design, construction and maintenance.

The two ministries are hoping to make better use of new methods on road building and maintenance and to get more provinces to make use of the latest data on roads through a new training programme. The work is being carried out with the help of the British-backed South East Asia Community Access Programme (SEACAP), which has carried out research on developing access in rural areas through better roads.

As the current process of administrative decentralisation means the MoT is no longer responsible for rural roads, training in the area is crucial as provincial authorities who now have to take care of their own roads don't have as much experience in the area as the two ministries.

MARD's vice director of



Workers upgrade a road in Nghi Liên Commune, Nghi Lộc District in Nghệ An Province. A project on training provincial road engineers aims to improve the design, construction and maintenance of rural roads in provinces across the nation. — VNA/VNS Photo Lan Xuân

Finance and Administration, Nguyễn Tiến Dũng, said Việt Nam needs new options on roads for local areas.

"It's very important that the provinces themselves,

which are now responsible for rural transport, get up to speed on new concepts and methods," said Dũng.

The new training project will focus on improving road work through giving

provincial engineers more technical knowledge and teaching them how to make more informed decisions on what the best road and paving options may be for their localities. This in-

cludes giving the provinces better access to a database of information on roadwork, and having provincial officers and ministries get more involved in updating the database and

developing an information-sharing culture.

Work on improving rural roads is seen as a key part of Việt Nam's strategy on eliminating poverty, as investment in other sectors such as education and employment are only effective if people have access — often a problem in isolated rural areas where roads and transport services are far behind what's available in urban areas.

MARD project officer Trần Xuân Hồ said that while the construction of roads was important, there needed to be a greater focus on ensuring good maintenance.

"Construction is a small piece of the life cycle of a road, maybe 6 months or a year long. But maintenance goes on for 20-50 years. It is easy to see what you need to really plan for," said Hồ.

Nguyễn Tiến Dũng said SEACAP had acted as a bridge for co-operation between MoT and MARD. SEACAP will work with the two ministries to train a team of road experts who will in turn train 90 provincial engineers. — VNS