

Anti-pollution measures in place at Bataan coal plant

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Anti-pollution measures have been put in place inside a coal-fired power plant in Bataan, a month after a reportedly hazardous “ash” spill caused several residents to fall ill.

In its latest inspection report, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Environmental Management Bureau (DENR-EMB) in Central Luzon (Region 3) said both the temporary ash disposal facilities of Petron Limay Terminal (PLT) Cove and San Miguel Corporation (SMC) within the Petron Bataan Refinery complex in Limay, Bataan are now covered with soil.

Both areas were compacted and sprinkled with water to prevent ash dispersion and deposition to nearby communities, it added.

It also reported that the PLT Cove area had already been planted with frog grass.

During a recent meeting of the multipartite monitoring team (MMT) formed by the Bataan provincial government, Petron disclosed that around 3,550 metric tons (MT) of ash have been hauled out and 7,950 MT have been treated.

It also pointed out that newly generated ashes are being washed to reduce its corrosivity, after which sampling of the washed bottom ash is undertaken.

The MMT only allows the ashes to be hauled out when the sampling passes the DENR standard for corrosivity.

The treated ash is transported to SMC subsidiary Northern Cement Consolidated in Pangasinan, where it will be used as material for cement manufacturing.

SMC earlier clarified that the deposits were not ash but lime powder, which is being used as raw material in manufacturing cement.

Also in the meeting, Petron revealed its remediation and rehabilitation plans for the PLT Cove area, mitigation measures for odor nuisance, and relocation of affected families.

The provincial government gave assurance that there would be available housing for 250 affected families within the next three to five months.

Bataan Gov. Albert Garcia said informal settlers within the SMC’s buffer zone would be given priority.

The establishment of Environmental Guarantee Fund (EGF), which would be used for epidemiological study or health assessment that will be done in affected communities, was also discussed.

The cost of the study would be sourced from the EGF of Petron and SMC, pursuant to existing environmental impact assessment rules and regulations.

EMB Acting Director Jacqueline Caancan said the EMB-Central Luzon has committed to continue to monitor the environmental impact of the ash spill in nearby communities.

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