

DENR probe of ‘polluting’ steel plants starts in Pampanga

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CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is starting today in Pampanga province its investigation of the high air pollution levels allegedly caused by various steel smelting plants in the country.

The probe, which Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu announced on Wednesday, came after Clean Air Philippines Movement Inc. (Capmi) released the results of the ambient air quality monitoring that it commissioned on Oct. 6 and 7 in four stations in San Simon town in Pampanga, two stations each in Caloocan and Valenzuela cities and four stations in Davao City.

At least 11 of 12 stations measured total suspended particulates (TSP) that were higher than the standard 300 ug/Ncm (micrograms per normal cubic meter of air) per 60 minutes.

Particulates are said to be the deadliest form of air pollutants as these are able to enter the lungs and blood stream that may lead to permanent DNA mutations, heart attack and premature death, the World Health Organization said.

The Philippine Clean Air Act of 1999 placed a healthy guideline value for TSP at 230 ug/Ncm daily.

A government team consisting of personnel from the national offices of the DENR and Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) is due to get its own samples in and around steel plants operating in Barangay San Isidro in San Simon, Elisa Dimaliwat, chief of the environmental monitoring and enforcement division of the EMB Central Luzon, said on Thursday.

In a statement, Cimatu identified the steel plants as Melters Steel Corp., Real Steel Corp. and Wan Chiong Steel Corp. in San Simon; Metro Dragon Steel Corp. in Caloocan City; and Davao Mighty Steel Corp. in Davao City.

The EMB Central Luzon issued notices of violations and cease and desist orders on Melters and Wan Chiong in June. These have resumed operations after installing additional antipollution devices, EMB regional director, Lormelyn Claudio, told the Inquirer by telephone.

Only Real Steel issued a statement saying the company has been adhering to the conditions of its environmental compliance certificate. —*TONETTE OREJAS*

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