

HEADLINES

DENR urged to stop Manila Bay reclamation projects

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Local fisherfolk and environment activists from Bulacan to Cavite on Wednesday staged a protest march calling on the government to block the approval of 10 reclamation projects along Manila Bay that, they said, endanger the lives of about 124,000 persons living along its coastline.

The protest coincided with their filing of a complaint calling on the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to deny the environmental compliance certificates (ECC) and area clearance permits of erring land reclamation projects.

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Regulatory framework

“These destructive projects should be prohibited until such time that a rational regulatory framework over coastal resource management is put in place,” said Leon Dulce, national coordinator of Kalikasan People’s Network for the Environment.

The groups are opposing the proposed reclamation projects that will span the Manila Bay coastline from Bataan province in the north to Cavite province in the south.

These include the Manila Bay Integrated Flood Control and Coastal Defense Expressway Project covering the coastal areas in Navotas City to Balanga City in Bataan; the 2,500-hectare Aerotropolis airport project in Bulacan province; and the 650 ha Navotas City Coastal Bay Development Project.

Aside from displacement, the projects would lead to the clearing of hundreds of mangrove trees, which serve as habitat for fish and crustaceans that serve as food for migratory birds and humans, Kalikasan said.

Natural barriers

“These mangroves also serve as natural barriers against storm surge, wave, and tsunami hazards,” Dulce said.

The groups submitted their complaint to Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu and Director Metodio Turbella of the Environmental Management Bureau.

In their four-page letter-complaint, they said the planned reclamation projects failed to comply with guidelines of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

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“Manila Bay reclamation projects in Bulacan, Navotas, Manila and Cavite have been found engaging in patently illegal development activities without consent from communities and clearance from scientific assessors,” the complaint read in part.

Kalikasan cited the Bulacan Aerotropolis as an “emblematic case.” It said the project would destroy mangroves and displace communities, despite not having a formal contract and an ECC.

“From grossly bastardizing the public participation mechanisms and environmental regulations of the Environmental Impact Assessment process, to the harassment of critics, these projects are wantonly violating people’s environmental rights.

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