

DENR: Air, water around Bataan plants ‘not contaminated’

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San Miguel Consolidated Power Corp. coal-fired power plant in Limay, Bataan
(PHOTO BY TONETTE OREJAS / INQUIRER CENTRAL LUZON)

MANILA — The Department of Environment and Natural Resources has seen no contamination in the air and water around the much assailed power plant and fuel refinery in Limay, Bataan.

These were the initial results of tests conducted in the past two months around the San Miguel Corporation (SMC) subsidiaries, SMC Consolidated Power Corp. (SMCCPC) plant and a coal-fired plant of the Petron Bataan fuel Refinery.

Residents from Limay, Bataan accused the plants late last year of causing health problems due to the ash fall or spill from their byproduct storage facilities.

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But in a statement on Tuesday, the DENR said that “a 24-hour monitoring” conducted from January 26 to 27 by private laboratory CRL Environmental Services in sampling stations identified by the Limay Concerned Citizens Inc. detected no volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and hydrogen sulfide (H₂S).

“The coastal water along PLT Cove was found as not contaminated with substances that could be attributed directly to Petron’s dumping of bottom ash in the area,” the DENR said.

A sampling from the area’s “monitoring well” was also “within acceptable pH levels,” the DENR said.

Ambient air sampling for total suspended particulates and sulfur dioxide at the PEX Site and Carbon Site at the Barangay Lamao port conducted by the DENR Environmental Management Bureau Central Luzon also found that the air in the area was “within the National Ambient Air Quality Guideline Values.”

Nevertheless, the EMB will continue to assess the environmental quality of neighboring communities in Limay, according to EMB acting director Jacqueline Caancan.

The EMB Central Luzon also said that the two bottom ash dump facilities within the Petron Bataan Refinery (PBR) complex in Limay town have not been used, following earlier orders from the DENR to stop dumping activities on the site.

The EMB said that both the temporary ash disposal facilities of PLT Cove and San Miguel Corp. (SMC) “are now covered with soil, compacted and sprinkled with water to prevent ash dispersion and deposition to nearby communities.”

The DENR quoted Petron as saying that around 3,550 metric tons (MT) of ash have been hauled out to SMC subsidiary Northern Cement Consolidated in Pabgasinan, and 7,950 MT have been treated.

The EMB reported that the PLT Cove area had even already been planted with frog grass. **SFM**

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