

# Duterte okays SMC's new airport project

SPEs for project finance given SBL leeway EU upgrades IPR category of PH in terms of protection, enforcement

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Manila Bulletin · 27 Apr 2018 · By CHINO S. LEYCO

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President Rodrigo R. Duterte approved late Wednesday nearly a trillion pesos worth of infrastructure projects, including the San Miguel Corp.'s unsolicited proposal to build an international airport in Bulacan, the Department of Finance (DOF) said.

Based on a list provided by Finance Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez III to reporters, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Board, chaired by the President, approved during its April 25 meeting about 20 big-ticket infrastructure projects worth more than R974.8 billion.

The largest among the projects approved by the NEDA Board is the R735.63-billion airport proposal submitted by San Miguel, a facility that once completed should help ease congestion at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA).

San Miguel's proposed new international "aerotropolis" involves an airport covering 1,168 hectares and a city complex to be built at a 2,500-hectare area along Manila Bay in Bulacan, Bulacan.

The planned 50-year airport project will entail building six parallel runways with an initial annual capacity of 100 million passengers, or over triple the NAIA.

Dominguez, however, said that San Miguel's unsolicited proposal is still "subject to final review of concession agreement."

San Miguel's airport project will be subject to a Swiss Challenge under government rules, meaning other groups will be invited to make competing offers, with the original bidder given the right to match any better proposal.

Other infrastructure projects approved by the President are the R50.03-billion Subic-Clark railway project, Clark International Airport expansion project costing R12.55 billion along with the Ambal-Simuay river and Rio Grande de Mindanao River Flood Control Projects costing R39.22 billion

Likewise, the Pasig-Marikina river and Manggahan floodway bridges construction project (R27.368 billion), and the bridge construction acceleration project for socioeconomic development (R27.37 billion) were also approved by the NEDA Board.

The chief executive also gave his green light for the proposed change in scope, cost and loan validity extension of the integrated disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation measures in lowlying areas of Pampanga bay (R6.15 billion) and the rural agro-enterprise partnership for inclusive development and growth project (R4.78 billion).

Dominguez said, however, said that rural agro-enterprise partnership's approval is subject to certain conditions.

"Confirmation subject to have a twophased approach with up to 25 percent of total project costs as pilot-testing phase and upon successful performance evaluation, will expand the project to second phase of up to 75 percent of total project costs," the finance chief said.

The NEDA Board also confirmed the approval for the Davao Food Complex project (P1.02 billion), the proposed restructuring for the Integrated Natural Resources and Environment Management project (R7.24 billion), change

in scope and cost for Integrated Marine Environment Monitoring System Phase 2 project ( P1.68 billion).

Lastly, the proposed increase in cost of the New Centennial Water Source Kaliwa Dam project (P14.32 billion) was approved by President Duterte.

Dominguez, meanwhile, said that there were eight other projects confirmed by the NEDA Board through a referendum.

These are the proposed change in financing from local funding to Official Development Assistance of the Arterial Bypass project phase III, contract packages I, II, and IV as well as the Improving Growth Corridors in Mindanao Road Sector Project (P25.26 billion)

The planned change in design and increase in cost of the Chico River Pump Irrigation project (P4.37 billion) and the conflict-sensitive resource and asset management program – financial co-operation P1.27 billion) and the Safe Philippines Project Phase 1 (P20.3 billion) were also approved.

The board also granted the request for Supplemental Loan for the New Bohol Airport Construction and Sustainable Environment Protection project, the two-year loan Validity Extension of the Samar Pacific Coastal Road project (P1.03 billion) and 46-month Extension of Loan Validity and Project Completion Schedule for the Jalaur River Multi-Purpose Project, Stage II (P11.21 billion).

The Philippines, one of Asia's fastest growing economies, is trying to improve infrastructure such as roads, ports, railways and airports with the help of the private sector under its \$180-billion "Build, Build, Build" program. (With Reuters)