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## Bulacan airport groundbreaking eyed in Q2

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THE TRANSPORTATION department is expecting the Bulacan airport project groundbreaking, which has been repeatedly postponed, to take place within the second quarter.

“Hopefully, we can do a formal inauguration by April or May of this year,” Transportation Secretary Arthur P. Tugade said during the virtual Asia CEO Forum on Tuesday.

SPOTLIGHT



San Miguel Corp.'s (SMC) P740-billion airport project is expected to be completed in four to six years. The airport is projected to accommodate 100 million to 200 million passengers annually, he noted.

Mr. Tugade added that "works are being done" even as the department and the company are "quiet."

SMC had initially planned to break ground for the airport project in December 2019, but it was delayed after the government raised concerns about its contract.

In January last year, the DoTr announced another schedule for the groundbreaking ceremony set within that month.

Mr. Tugade said in June the groundbreaking was delayed anew due to "private issues" of SMC President and Chief Operating Officer Ramon S. Ang and the coronavirus pandemic.

SMC in October said the groundbreaking for the project would take place by December, but later announced the project would get off the ground within the first quarter of 2021, after it awarded global firm Boskalis a \$1.73-billion contract to restore the land where it will be built.

The airport project has faced criticisms from various groups over its environmental impact.

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On Monday, SMC said it has “laid out an extensive flood mitigation plan that includes planting close to 200,000 mangroves along the Bulacan coastlines, and cleaning, dredging, and widening of key Bulacan tributaries belonging to the Marilao-Meycauayan-Obando River System.”

SMC has tapped Groupe ADP (Aeroports de Paris), Meinhardt Group and Jacobs Engineering Group for the construction of the airport. These firms are behind Singapore’s Changi airport, France’s Charles de Gaulle airport, and the United States’ Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International airport. — **Arjay L. Balinbin**

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