

13 September 2023 Wednesday



DENR

NEWS ALERTS

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



TITLE:

PAGE:

DATE:

DENR urged to rehabilitate 1K hectares of AUU fishponds turned over by BFAR

INTERNATIONAL nongovernment organization (NGO) Oceana has called on the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to immediately rehabilitate abandoned, underdeveloped, and underutilized (AUU) fishponds as part of its effort to rehabilitate degraded coastal and marine environment.

Atty. Rose Liza Eisma-Osorio, Oceana Philippines' legal and policy head, said fishponds whether covered by fishpond lease agreements (FLAs) or not, are supposed to be reverted back as mangrove forests at the end of their lease agreements or in case of failure of the fishpond owners to make them productive.

An environmental lawyer, Eisma-Osorio said there are cases wherein former mangrove forests that were used as fishponds are somehow reclassified and declared as alienable and disposable land, hence, making the acquisition of these properties by private individuals legal.

"Somehow, fishponds that are covered by FLAs or not are reclassified and declared as alienable and disposable when in fact these are public lands and are not supposed to be subjected to land reclamation," Osorio said.

She said fishponds that are abandoned, undeveloped, or underutilized (AUU) should be rehabilitated by restoring or replanting indigenous mangrove species that naturally occur in the area.

As of January 2023, there are over 1,000 hectares of AUU fishponds in various parts of the country that need immediate rehabilitation.

"The DENR should revert these fishponds back to their original classification as mangrove forest," Osorio stressed, as she cautioned the DENR and concerned local government units (LGUs) in pushing for their reclassification as alienable and disposable land.

Responding to an inquiry made by Oceana on the status of AUU fishponds, Atty. Demosthenes R. Escoto, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) National Director said a total of 994 hectares of fishponds with or without FLAs have been reverted back to the administrative jurisdiction of the DENR as of January 2023.

The list of 54 fishponds that were reverted back to the administrative jurisdiction of the DENR could be leased back again to the same individuals or other interested individuals who may wish to venture in aquaculture.

Oceana, however, said instead of leasing these areas for continued use as fishponds, the DENR should allocate funds and implement mangrove reforestation activities in these areas.

Among those reverted to the DENR's jurisdiction, the biggest AUU fishponds include a 210-hectare fishpond in Subnipa, Ulutanga, Zamboanga Sibugay; and a 254-hectare fishpond in Hinactacan, Jaro, Iloilo. Other big AUU on the list are the 48-hectare fishpond in Cawayan, in Real, Quezon Province, the 45-hectare fishpond in Dapdap and Villahermosa in Tarangnan, Samar, and a 40-hectare fishpond Panas, Canijay, in Bohol.

Aside from those already reverted back to the DENR, BFAR has also identified a total of 8 fishponds with no FLA, the biggest of which is a 41-hectare fishpond in Pedada, Ajuy, Iloilo.

Oceana has been calling for the massive restoration of degraded coastal and marine environments, particularly beach and mangrove forests to strengthen the country's natural defense against tsunamis and storm surges and boost capture fishery production by allowing the juvenile fish to grow and reproduce, and eventually replenish the country's fish stock in time for the recommended fishing season.

Jonathan L. Mayuga



Groups launch alliance to halt, reverse mangrove forest loss

MORE than half of the country's beach and mangrove forests have been lost to deforestation due to harvesting for wood and charcoal production, conversion to fishpond for aquaculture use, and the unbridled development in coastal areas that include dump-and-fill activities.

To halt and reverse this rapid rate of mangrove loss, Philippine-based environmental groups launched on Tuesday the Philippines Chapter of the Global Mangrove Alliance (GMA), a global alliance dedicated to the restoration of mangroves.

Often referred to as "fish factories" for their ability to facilitate the reproduction of fish and other seafood, mangroves are also considered life-saving ecosystems because of the natural defense system they provide to communities against storm surges and tsunamis.

The latest forestry statistics—the 2021 Forestry Statistics of the Philippines prepared by the Forest Management Bureau (FMB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)—reported that only around 301,400 are left of the country's mangrove forests, a decline of slightly over 2,000 hectares compared to the 2015 mangrove forest cover estimated at 303,373 hectares.

Launched in 2018 during the World Ocean Summit by Conservation International (CI), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Nature Conservancy (TNC), Wetlands International, and World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the Global Mangrove Alliance (GMA) now includes over 30 member organizations that share the aim of scaling up the recovery of mangroves through equitable and effective expansion of both mangrove protection and the restoration of former mangrove areas. **Jonathan L. Mayuga**



09-13-23

TITLE: _____

PAGE _____

DATE _____

DEATH CAME WHILE ON LOAN IN SINGAPORE

CONSERVATIONISTS MOURN PASSING OF PH EAGLE 'GEO'

By **Erwin M. Mascariñas**
and **Ryan D. Rosaura**
@InqNational

DILIGAN CITY—The wildlife conservation community mourned the passing of 19-year-old Philippine Eagle “Geothermica” on Sept. 7 in Singapore, where he was on breeding loan.

“Geo,” as the male eagle was fondly called, together with the female eagle “Sambisig” or “Sam,” had been in Singapore’s Mandai Wildlife Reserve since 2019, as part of a pioneering international cooperation to save the critically endangered raptor, which is the rarest in the world.

The pair’s trip to the Lion City in 2019 was timed for the celebration of the golden jubilee of Philippines-Singapore bilateral relations. They were

both issued Philippine passports by the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Geo was admitted at an avian hospital on Sept. 6 “after his care team observed that he was not feeding well, and initial blood tests indicated that he was fighting an infection,” Mandai said in a statement.

“But Geo’s medical condition took a turn for the worse (on Thursday) evening. During his ongoing treatment at the hospital, Geo collapsed and had to be resuscitated twice” before he succumbed to a severe lung infection, Mandai said.

A fighter

Mandai appealed for public sympathy amid the tragic loss: “Geo was a fighter and his care team and veterinarians did their best to save him. This

is a loss that they are still processing and we ask that you keep them in your thoughts.”

According to Mandai, they were set to perform a necropsy and lab tests “to get a definitive diagnosis” of Geo’s death.

It was noted that prior to his illness, Geo “began displaying behaviors indicating interest to mate with Sambisig.”

“Both eagles came into our care as a future breeding pair. Our team is turning their attention to Sambisig to ensure she adjusts well in this period of transition,” Mandai added.

Geo and Sam are the first breeding pair of Philippine Eagles to be sent outside the country as part of a recovery plan in case the captive-breeding population in Philippine Eagle Foundation’s Davao facility gets decimated by a disease like the bird flu. **INQ**



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
AND
INITIATIVES
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Manila Standard

34
PAGE

UPPER
 LOWER

PAGE 1
STORY

BANNER
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

09-13-23

TITLE: _____

PAGE _____

DATE _____

IN BRIEF

Maynilad spending P3b to upgrade 17 STPs

WEST zone concessionaire Maynilad Water Services Inc. is spending over P3 billion to upgrade 17 of its existing 22 sewage treatment plants (STPs) over the next five years.

The upgrade involves adding treatment processes in 17 STPs to enhance nutrient-removal capability. This is in compliance with the revised effluent standards under DENR Administrative Order DAO 2021-19 of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources which set more stringent wastewater treatment guidelines versus those imposed in other countries.

Maynilad's Parañaque Water Reclamation Facility, the biggest STP in terms of volume output, is already compliant with DAO 2021-19.

By 2027, all 22 existing wastewater treatment plants in the west zone—which have a combined treatment capacity of around 684,707 cubic meters of wastewater per day—will be upgraded to conform to DAO 2021-19 standards, Maynilad said.

Maynilad said the new STPs it would build in the future would be fitted with the upgraded nutrient-removal processes.

Othel V. Campos



TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

GOTCHA

JARIUS BONDOC



DENR ignoring public appeals to evict watershed landgrabbers

High environment officials are ignoring pleas to evict big-time landgrabbers from Upper Marikina Watershed. Instead they're easing out protectors of remnant forests and 60-million-year-old limestone heritage.

Watersheds are off limits to commerce, agriculture and residence. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources must enforce that.

But in Rizal province's Marikina Watershed, officials break environment and red tape laws and, consequently, public trust.

They abet quarrying, erection of mansions and picnic resorts, forest chainsawing, squatting and road paving. Deadly floods that those illegalities cause on millions of dwellers below mean nothing to them.

Congress and the ombudsman must censure their gross negligence.

Seventy scientists and academics, civic and youth heads, lawyers and artists begged President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. last June 5 to dismantle the land-grabbing gangs: "We call upon our leaders to intervene and help address the real problem at hand: continued watershed deforestation, exacerbated by unabated operation of syndicates."

Only one-fifth of forests remain in the 26,126-hectare Marikina Watershed, they said. With adjacent 27,608-hectare Kaliwa Watershed Forest, "the two have greatest impact to the country."

"Support the Masungi initiative," they referred to a 3,000-hectare portion that a foundation has been rewilding for seven years. Masungi Georeserve Foundation (MGF), they said, has:

- "Rescued 2,000 hectares of forestland previously held by syndicates – not farmers or tribesmen as trumpeted by syndicates – and returned it to the watershed where it rightfully belongs;
- "Achieved the cancellation of large quarries threatening irreparable damage to the ecosystem;
- "Opposed encroachments by swimming pool resorts and land speculators, preventing further watershed degradation;
- "Thwarted five major forest invasions, covered by national media;
- "Convinced a claimant to return 165 hectares for conservation;
- "Rescued ancient Masungi limestones – a national geological and biodiversity treasure – and transformed it into a globally-acclaimed conservation model; and
- "Received in September 2022 the UN Sustainable Development Goals Action Campaign 'Inspire Award' out of 3,000 global nominees."

On June 7 the Presidential Action Center referred the petition to DENR Sec. Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga. "Expeditious action is requested [under] R.A. 11032, Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act of 2018, enforced by the Anti-Red Tape Authority," Malacñang said.

MGF president Ben Dumaliang also wrote Yulo-Loyzaga on June 19. He recounted the serious mauling of unarmed Masungi park rangers by landgrabbers' thugs in February 2022. As well, Yulo-Loyzaga's press statement that she's "reviewing the Masungi contract" by which predecessor Sec. Gina Lopez (now deceased) assigned the rewilding project in 2017.

Designate once and for all a DENR project manager, Dumaliang wrote.

That's to operationalize the Masungi oversight committee that the DENR secretary chairs, with MGF and an environmentalist as members.

Yulo-Loyzaga made Usec. for policy planning Jonas Leones reply. Leones in turn relayed the swimming pool resorts and road concreting issues to Usec. for field operations Juan Miguel Cuna. Cuna passed it on to the Southern Tagalog regional director in faraway Calamba, Laguna.

The 70 petitioners and MGF's Dumaliang got no action.

On the night of Aug. 26-27 gunshots were fired at the Masungi park ranger stations. At daybreak several 9-mm and 45-caliber shells were recovered. Two strangers fled the approaching rangers.

Later that morning, a group of men associated with two known watershed land claimants entered the reforestation nearest the highway and toppled trees.

In another Masungi portion, titled to the Republic of the Philippines, a police sergeant continues to reside. This, in defiance of Interior Sec. Benhur Abalos' barring of armed trespassers there in September 2022. A new structure is being built near one of a dozen unlicensed picnic resorts inside the watershed.

Dumaliang reported all these to Yulo-Loyzaga on Aug. 27. No action to date.

Certain DENR geodetic engineers, cartographers, technicians and lawyers have issued "lot surveys" to 30 land claimants inside the watershed. The surveys cover 1,774.71 hectares – 40,682 basketball courts, nearly half of Manila.

Using the surveys and backed by politicians, claimants sell or lease out plots. Two police generals have erected mansions. Picnic resorts divert river flow into swimming pools. All have no building or occupancy permits.

DENR officers falsely promise that special land patents will soon be issued under P.D. 324, October 1973. That P.D. previously excluded from Marikina Watershed 1,728,746 hectares of hillside Barangays Pinugay and Kayumbay in Teresa and Baras towns, Rizal.

But two subsequent edicts repealed P.D. 324:

One, The Forestry Code, P.D. 705, May 1975, that reverts as inalienable forest land all slopes 18 percent or steeper, except those occupied for at least 30 years. Since P.D. 324 was only a year-and-a-half old then, there were no 30-year occupants.

Two, Presidential Proclamation 1636, April 1977, "Declaring as National Park, Wildlife Sanctuary and Game Preserve" 146,310 hectares of Rizal, Bulacan, Laguna and Quezon mountaintops. No dwelling, hunting, tree cutting, commerce, destruction of vegetation and wildlife habitat disturbance. Covered were Marikina and Kaliwa Watersheds.

Still, DENR officers encourage encroachments.

On Oct. 6, 2022 Dumaliang already requested Yulo-Loyzaga to convene the Masungi oversight committee. The latter left the issues for Congress to act on.

"The department is currently preparing for these (congressional) hearings. We anticipate your cooperation and hope that the hearings will provide an opportunity to resolve any issues surrounding the Masungi Georeserve, if they exist," Yulo-Loyzaga wrote four days later.

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THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
SINCE 1908
MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



09-13-23

TITLE: _____

PAGE _____

DATE _____



CLEANUP DRIVE – Malabon City Mayor Jeannie Sandoval and the city police lead the coastal cleanup drive during International Coastal Cleanup Day at the megadike in Barangay Dampalit, Malabon City on Tuesday, Sept. 12, 2023. (Ali Vicoy)



D9-13-23

TITLE: _____

PAGE _____

DATE _____

PH faces AI threat

BIZ BUZZ



The Philippine government will need to swiftly address the rising threat of artificial intelligence (AI), especially on key sectors such as outsourcing, which is one of pillars of the economy.

This warning was raised by **Dr. Sanjay Sarma**, the Dean of the Asia School of Business (ASB) and a professor of mechanical engineering and the Sloan School of Management at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, during a recent visit to the Philippines.

"In the Philippines, it has to be a national effort [so] the government needs to be really cognizant," said Sarma, who likened climate change to the threat AI poses to the unprepared.

"It's like climate change is going to damage the environment. [AI] is going to hurt a lot of people. This is technology change," he said.

Sarma, who was in the country to also promote the ASB in Kuala Lumpur, said businesses need to level up their skills and technology to combat the threat. This also applies to the Philippine government, which can push new skills training so parts of the workforce can remain relevant.

"The Philippines should become the country that leads the world in how to use AI. It will put some people out of work, but at least you define the rules of how it works," he said. —MIGUEL R. CAMUS



TITLE: _____

PAGE _____

09-12-23
DATE

Honoring historic Hinulugang Taktak

Tomorrow, Sept. 14, several government and private sector organizations will gather in Antipolo City to celebrate the success of a partnership.

The officials of the provincial government of Rizal, the city government of Antipolo, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System, and private sector partner Manila Water will mark another milestone in their shared effort to restore what is perhaps one of the most famous tourism landmarks in the country.

For the thousands of Filipinos and foreigners who visit Antipolo, especially in summer, Hinulugang Taktak is their second destination, the first being the famous international shrine of the Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage – the Antipolo Cathedral.

Hinulugang Taktak carries a lot of memories for legions of Filipino families. This 70-foot-high waterfall is “tiny” compared to the other popular waterfalls in the country, such as Maria Cristina in Northern Mindanao (321 feet), or Pagsanjan Falls in Laguna (390 feet). Despite this, it is so famous that at one time – in the early 2000s – it was recognized as the country’s second most popular national park in the entire country.

Its fame did not start in the 2000s. It appears it had already attracted throngs of visitors as early as the 1920s. It was so famous that Filipino composer German San Jose aka Gerry Brandy immortalized it in his song “Tayo Na sa Antipolo,” which was sung by the renowned group Mabuhay Singers.

In his composition, Gerry Brandy referred to Hinulugang Taktak as “batis.” This translates into English as “brook” or “stream.” Gerry’s description may have been an appropriate one, given the relatively small land area oc-

cupied by the body of water into which Hinulugang Taktak empties.

The tiny fall’s water comes from five of the 16 barangays of the city. What we were told by our elders in Antipolo is that, until the 1960s, the waters of Hinulugang Taktak were so clean that people bathed in it and folks washed their laundry there. Thousands of visitors and excursionists picnicked in its banks. It was perhaps one of the most iconic, most “Instagrammable” tourist spots in our country until the mid-60s.

Since then, the quality of the water from the falls and the brook became noticeably polluted, and, with the passage of time, became unfit for swimming. The risk of losing a national treasure gained widespread recognition. Concerned citizens, government agencies, and then-Rizal Governor Ito Ynares took aggressive moves to save the falls and the brook. Former President Joseph Estrada made a timely move to have the area declared a “protected landscape” through a proclamation. Former Governor Nini Ynares intensified the effort to get all sectors involved in the restoration project and clean-up of the area.

The sustained public-private sector collaboration paid off. There was one more initiative needed to bring the falls and the brook closer to their original state: making sure that the headwaters that find their way into the falls are clean.

This is where the Manila Water Company stepped in.

In 2018, Manila Water signed a partnership covenant with the province of Rizal and several local governments under the latter. The partnership was for a joint advocacy for the protection of the province’s natural resources and environment.

The first project under this partnership was the construction of a sewage treatment plant (STP) for Hinulu-

gang Taktak.

Under this project, Manila Water commenced the construction of an STP with a 16-million-liter-per-day (MLD) capacity.

The plant, which costs some ₱2.5 billion, includes a four-kilometer combined sewer network benefiting some 160,000 residents of the city.

The latest report is that completion of the Hinulugang Taktak STP has gone beyond the 50 percent mark. As soon as the facility becomes operational, waste water falling into a catchment area near the falls will undergo a treatment process before it is discharged on its way to Hinulugang Taktak.

The water treatment process includes the removal and dissolution of solid wastes, particles, and toxic chemicals. It will also involve the process of filtration which will eliminate odor, as well as disinfection where viruses, bacteria, and parasites are killed. We hope that these processes of modern technology will be effective in the effort to bring the waters of Hinulugang Taktak back to their pristine state.

During tomorrow’s affair, the participating public and private sector entities will celebrate the success of another collaborative effort.

The event will serve as a reminder that the restoration and protection of our natural resources is not the job of one entity alone. It is a responsibility that falls on the shoulders of everyone.

(For feedback, please email it to antipolocitygov@gmail.com or send it to Block 6 Lot 10 Sta. Barbara 1 cor. Bradley St., Mission Hills Subd., Brgy. San Roque, Antipolo City, Rizal.)



**THE VIEW
FROM RIZAL**
DR. JUN YNARES



TITLE:

PAGE

Maynilad investing P3 B for STPs

By DANESSA
RIVERA

West zone concessionaire Maynilad Water Services Inc. (Maynilad) is spending over P3 billion to upgrade 17 of its existing 22 sewage treatment plants (STPs) over the next five years.

The upgrade involves adding treatment processes in the 17 STPs to enhance nutrient-removal capability.

Maynilad said this is in compliance with the revised effluent standards (DAO 2021-19) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), which set more stringent wastewater treatment guidelines versus those imposed in other countries.

Through the program, the west zone concessionaire targets to have all its 22 existing wastewater treatment plants—which have a combined treatment capacity of around 684,707 cubic meters of wastewater per day—upgraded to conform to DAO 2021-19 standards.

Maynilad said the Parañaque water reclamation facility—currently its biggest STP in terms of volume output—is already compliant with DAO 2021-19.

Meanwhile, the new STPs to be constructed in the succeeding years will already have those upgraded nutrient-removal processes factored in its treatment capacity design.

Maynilad's wastewater treatment facilities remove harmful substances from the wastewater generated by its customers before it is discharged to receiving bodies of water, thus contributing to the clean-up and rehabilitation of Manila Bay.

The upgrade of the 17 STPs is part of Maynilad's P178-billion wastewater management spending plan from 2023 to 2046, which aims to expand sewer coverage and manage pollution loading in bodies of water.

Also included in this program are the construction of 18 new STPs in different areas within the west concession, and the installation of around 360 kilometers of new sewer lines that will catch and convey used water from households to STPs, among other wastewater-related projects.

Maynilad is the largest private water concessionaire in the Philippines in terms of customer base.



The Cabinet should now mandate nuclear policy

IN an apparent bid to help the Philippines



FIRST THINGS FIRST
FRANCISCO S. TATAD

accelerate the inclusion of nuclear energy into its energy program, a number of foreign experts are converging in Manila in the next few days to explore various ways of "advancing regional cooperation for energy security and economic recovery in the march to decarbonization."

Billed as the Nuclear Power Forum in Asia, the forum gets under way on September 13-15 at the Bellevue Hotel in Alabang, with international experts from India, Japan, Vietnam, South Korea, Cambodia, the Philippines, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the World Nuclear Association, the World Association of Nuclear Operators, and the Asean Center for Energy participating.

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■ TATAD FROM A1

The Cabinet should now mandate nuclear policy

India leads the list of foreign participants with at least 11 inter-related agencies, including its Department of Atomic Energy, the principal scientific adviser to the government of India, the Department of Atomic Energy Safeguard, the Nuclear Power Corp. of India Ltd., the Bhavini India Nuclear Power Corp., the Bhabha Atomic Research Center, the Indira Gandhi Center for Atomic Research, the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board, the Indian Nuclear Society, and the National Disaster Management Authority.

Vietnam is represented by its Ministry of Science and Technology, the Vietnam Atomic Energy Agency, the Vietnam Atomic Energy Institute, the Vietnam Agency for Radiation and Nuclear Safety, the deputy prime minister and chairman of the Central Steering Committee for Natural Disaster Prevention and Control, the Vietnam Disaster Management Authority, and the State Treasury of Vietnam.

Japan is represented by the Japan Electric Power Information Center; Korea by the Export-Import Bank of Korea; and Cambodia by the Ministry of Mines and Energy, the National Committee for Disaster Management, and Cambodia's Nuclear Energy Association. The Philippines is represented by the Department of Energy, the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Office of Civil Defense, and the National Treasurer.

The forum's declared objective is to "facilitate in-depth discus-

sions on building relationships that will accelerate the process of decarbonization in the Philippines and Asia, using both nuclear and renewable energy sources, and prevent worst-case scenarios like "global boiling" (more extreme than "global warming").

The Philippines gets 47 percent of its energy supply from coal, 22 percent from gas, 23 percent from hydro and geothermal, and pays the highest electricity cost in Asia on a kilowatt-hour basis — higher than Japan's. This is seen as the first obstacle to the country's sustained economic growth.

In 1976, President Ferdinand E. Marcos (1969-1986), father of the incumbent president Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., built the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant (BNPP) in Morong, Bataan. This was completed in 1984 but was never fueled after political controversy shut it down, with his political adversaries alleging bribery and corruption. These charges were never proved and were ultimately dismissed by a US jury in 1993. There were also allegations that the plant was built close to an earthquake fault and posed an extreme danger to the population. The exact opposite of this was proven.

In 1991, Mount Pinatubo erupted in the tri-boundary of Pampanga, Tarlac and Zambales provinces, burying old towns and cities under tons of steaming lava and suspending most of economic life in Central Luzon. It was the second largest volcano

eruption of the last century, after the Novarupta volcano eruption in the Aleutian Range in Alaska in 1912, but it left the BNPP structure in Morong, Bataan, 5 miles away from the volcano, completely unshaken and intact.

To date, the BNPP has had three sister plants operating safely and profitably for the last 30 years in South Korea, Slovenia and Brazil. South Korea, which operates 23 nuclear reactors from which it generates 20.5 GWe of nuclear energy, or 22 percent of its total electrical generation capacity, has offered to rehabilitate the BNPP within five years for \$1.1 billion.

Studies have shown that because of Cory Aquino's decision to mothball the BNPP after she became the revolutionary president following the ouster of Marcos, and the nuclear disaster at the Chernobyl power plant in 1986, the economy decelerated from the uninterrupted power blackouts and from not operating the BNPP. Experts have estimated that the economy lost at least \$13 billion by not operating the BNPP.

Informed public opinion seems to agree that the BNPP should be revived and that nuclear energy should be made part of the national energy program, focusing on small and medium-scale reactors strategically distributed across the country's many islands. The President has spoken clearly and eloquently on this, and the rest of the nation has

heard, but there seems to be some difficulty trying to implement his policy directive at the level of the Department of Energy.

Official sources say that during his last meeting in Malacañang with Energy Secretary Raphael P. M. Lotilla and Dr. Carlo Arcilla, director of the Philippine Nuclear Research Institute, the President directed Lotilla to get the program going. But nothing has happened since.

I know Lotilla to be an honest man and one of the nation's most trustworthy technocrats. In 1994, during our deliberations on the Senate resolution concurring in the ratification of the agreement establishing the World Trade Organization, Lotilla and Ambassador Lilia Bautista, our permanent representative to the UN in Geneva, helped me handle privatization, liberalization, deregulation and tariff reform issues on the floor, and helped Sen. Blas Ople and Sen. Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, before she became president, handle some administrative questions.

I have not lost faith in Lotilla, but it is possible he is encountering unseen head winds in trying to comply with the President's instructions. With the DoE and the DFA working together in the Alabang forum, I hope Lotilla and Foreign Secretary Enrique Manalo can find a way to craft the necessary Cabinet directive, making nuclear energy part of our energy program.

fstatad@gmail.com



Radiation contamination—the modern norm?



LITO GAGNI

RECENTLY, the world has been abuzz with controversy over the August 24th discharge of treated radioactive water from Japan's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, where a massive earthquake in March 2011 caused an accident that disrupted the operation of nuclear reactors. That discharge has elicited an alarming letter from a reader and we are paraphrasing here his take on the matter.

At first glance, the emptying of the contaminated water seemed completely cleaned from all harmful elements with the exception of tritium. And Japanese authorities assured everybody that the concentration of tritium will not exceed the permissible level for drinking water and this was backed by the IAEA. So there is no reason to worry?

But Japan's neighboring countries have voiced their misgivings. Philip Sapozhnikov, a researcher at the Petr Shirshov Institute of Oceanology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, PhD in Biology, confirmed that tritium molecules are heavier than water molecules and therefore are unlikely to spread far, but rather will settle to the bottom of the ocean.

He also emphasized that "neither Russian nor Chinese experts have had the opportunity to analyze the content of radioactive elements in

the water directly at the site," so it is not yet possible to make an objective assessment of the concentration of radioactive elements and the real consequences of the discharge.

In turn, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin responded to Japan's statement about the suitability of water from the nuclear powerplant for drinking and bathing by suggesting that they themselves use it for these purposes instead of pouring it into the ocean, causing concern among the world community. But apparently the Japanese do not want to take advantage of this opportunity.

London probably takes a similar position on the admissibility of partial radiation contamination of territories in cases when it is in the national interest. This can be confirmed by the UK's supply of depleted uranium ammunition to Ukraine where in mid-May 2023, presumably after

So what then is the real purpose of London's supply of controversial weapons? An opportunity to take advantage of free (or even beneficially for themselves) disposal of weapons that are not needed in their homeland? To cause maximum damage to the Slavic peoples? Or is it a desire to gradually accustom us to the idea that radiation contamination is the modern norm?

a strike by Russian precision-guided missiles on warehouses with British munitions in Khmelnytsky region of Ukraine, an increase in radiation levels was recorded.

With that bombing the deterioration of the radiation situation was also recorded in the city of Lublin in eastern Poland near the Ukrainian border, where the normal concentration of bismuth exceeded 6-7 times. Bismuth is an isotope that is one of the decay products of depleted uranium. The next day, Polish authorities confirmed the jump in the concentration of bismuth in the air, but said that the situation had normalized, and the increase in the level of bismuth itself has nothing to do with the possible destruction of ammunition.

London, in turn, despite its statements that the transfer of depleted uranium shells was not contrary to international law, did not miss the opportunity to absolve itself of responsibility for the possible conse-

quences and shifted it to Kyiv. For her part, Serbian Health Minister Danica Grujicic accused Britain and the Nato bloc of hypocrisy for their intention to use depleted uranium munitions in Ukraine.

She recalled that this type of weapon was actively used during the bombing of Yugoslavia by the North Atlantic alliance countries. As a result, several generations of Serbs suffered from an increased incidence of leukemia and cancer, including among children.

It has become clear that the UK's supply of depleted uranium ammunition to Ukraine not only failed to change the situation on the battlefield in the confrontation with Russia, but also failed to significantly improve the combat capabilities of Ukraine's armed forces. And looking at the reaction of the Western countries supporting Kyiv, no one expected to achieve such a result.

So what then is the real purpose of London's supply of controversial weapons? An opportunity to take advantage of free (or even beneficially for themselves) disposal of weapons that are not needed in their homeland? To cause maximum damage to the Slavic peoples? Or is it a desire to gradually accustom us to the idea that radiation contamination is the modern norm?

It seems that no one will give us an answer to these questions. It is obvious that silence on this problem can lead to much more harmful consequences for all mankind in the future, perhaps even irreversible.