

WHO'S AFRAID OF COAL-FIRED POWER PLANT?

By Jess G. Dureza

Last Thursday from Manila, I took **Tiger Air** (*recently acquired by Cebu Pacific*) enroute to **Ca gayan de Oro** to visit the **STEAG** coal fired plant in **Villanueva** town inside the **PHIVIDEC** industrial estate. I thought I was out of Manila's bad traffic. I thought wrong! It took us about one hour sitting there on the taxi- way at the **NAIA** , before we could take off. Air traffic is now at its worst!

The last time I visited the **210MW STEAG** power plant was in 2006 or thereabouts. I was in charge of Mindanao at that time for Malacanang and I wanted then to see for myself what was the real score about the use of coal which critics said could " *dirty* " the environment. It just started operations then and my former Mindanao co-worker, **JEROME SOLDEVILLA** who is now STEAG's public affairs official arranged my visit. Now, about 8 years since, I am revisiting to get more recent updates on the plant, again through the courtesies of JEROME. I was joining some city officials and private sector groups from **Iligan City** who wanted answers to their questions about the proposed 20 MW plant that a company, **PowerSource Philippines Energy Inc. (PSPE)** plans to build within the present compound of the cement company Lafarge in Iligan City. (*I am senior advisor for PowerSource Phil., the proponent.*)

I recall how officials and stakeholders from **Davao City** once did a similar plant briefing at STEAG and when they returned home, some fears and apprehensions about a proposed coal plant were cleared and explained. Now, the construction of the

Aboitiz-owned 300MW p

ower plant in the boundary of Davao City and

Davao del Sur

is almost done and its commissioning and operation may start anytime next year.

We urgently need more power in Mindanao, given that our government-owned hydro generating plants in **Lake Lanao** are no longer reliable due to the fickleness of Mother Nature. Regretfully, climate change is upon Lake Lanao and us and other waterways cannot be relied upon-- as what we have witnessed currently.

The Iligan group included city councilors, barangay officials, the media, including "*anti coal*" protesters. The exercise was an example of citizen action and STEAG's JEROME did the briefing and answered pointed questions. He explained in layman's terms the state-of-the-art technology that protects the environment and prevents and /or mitigates the risks to the health of the population of host barangays where the plant is situated. For example, contrary to public belief, the emission of ashes or residues of the coal plant are "controlled in the flue gas by air cleaning devices such as flue-gas desulfurization (to

neutralize sulphur

) nitrogen dioxide reduction (

by using low NOX burnet and fly-ash removal (using bag filters)

." The ashes are therefore not released to the environment but are captured before they escape from the smokestack and then collected in a containment area. Some of these STEAG ashes are in fact transported over the years to the

LAFARGE

plant in

Iligan

as a raw material in the manufacture of cement.

Modern air pollution control devices and other state-of-the-art technology coupled with the quality of coal used bring about no traces of mercury, lead, arsenic and other toxic elements, it was explained.

In short, the feared "*dirty*" coal power generation, by modern technology is no longer "*dirtying*"

the environment. And STEAG for the last 8 years or so of operations has proven this to be so.

"*Seeing is believing*" and this seem to be the consensus of those whose visited the STEAG plant.

In the case of the proposed relatively small-sized 20MW proposed plant to be built within the Lafarge cement plant in Iligan, the possibility of a hybrid biomass component (*using biomass or grasses*) to fuel the plant to generate electricity is also in the planning board.

HONORING SEN.PATERNIO -- When the late **Sen. Vicente "Ting" Paterno** died a few days ago in Manila, one of his final wishes before he is buried is for his remains to be brought to Mindanao, a region he loved most and for which he devoted his expertise, resources and personal commitment for its development and progress. His last wish is being fulfilled today Monday when a convergence of Mindanao leaders and stakeholders just spontaneously decided to give him their fitting last respects. His cremated remains is arriving early this morning on board a private plane for neurological services and honors at the **Sangguniang Panlungsod** session hall and then a mass at the **Shrine of the Holy Infant Jesus** at Matina Heights, after which the ashes will be flown back to Manila in the same afternoon for his Wednesday interment.

I will quote a brief statement coming from **MS SUSAN CHANG** from **Kota Kinabalu**, Malaysia who knew how Senator Ting worked for Mindanao and for the **Brunei, Indonesia Malaysia Philippines East Asian Growth Area (BIMP EAGA)**. She sent this message when she learned of Sen. Ting's passing:

"In the East ASEAN Business Council, he is our Commander-in-Chief, the first Chairman and

the 'Father of BIMP-EAGA'.

"When he walks in – we all stand and greet him; and others would want to know who he is this ' handsome and highly respected by all'

"When he speaks – we all listen.

" When he proposes – we accept and agree.

When he calls – we come running ... even after 20 years.

As always, our beloved Sen. Ting always tells us "to connect the dots looking backward". He is a very special and unique friend who touches my heart and will always be remembered ... soft spoken, caring and I am going to miss him dearly ... "

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