

Bataan lawmaker rejects plan to revive nuclear plant

October 5, 2020 | 8:03 pm

THE Philippines should look at renewable energy sources instead of trying to revive the mothballed Bataan Nuclear Power Plant, a lawmaker from the province said on Monday.

"The trend worldwide is to do away with nuclear energy and turn to renewable sources of energy," Bataan Rep. Geraldine B. Roman said in a Viber group message.

The Energy department has sought a P92.3-billion budget for repairs on the nuclear plant under state-owned National Power Corp.'s budget for next year.

The 620-megawatt Bataan nuclear plant was built during the administration of the late dictator Ferdinand E. Marcos, and was shut down in 1986 due to alleged corruption and safety concerns. It was completed in the 1980s but was never used.

Construction started in 1976 and was stopped after the Three Mile Island nuclear accident in the US in 1979.

A safety inquiry into the plant revealed more than 4,000 defects. Among the issues raised was that it was built near a major geological fault line and close to the then dormant Mount Pinatubo in central Luzon.

By 1984, when the plant was nearly complete, its cost had reached 2.3 billion. Debt repayment of the plant had been the country's biggest single obligation.

President Rodrigo R. Duterte in July ordered various agencies led by the Energy department to evaluate the viability of nuclear power as a long-term energy option. This includes a study on the potential revival of the Bataan plant.

"As a resident and representative of the first district of Bataan, I want the best for my province," Mr. Roman said. "That is, cleaner and safer sources of energy. The proposed rehabilitation and opening of the BNPP poses too much risk on the health, safety and security

of our people.”

The revival of the plant could also kill the province’s tourism industry, he told BusinessWorld in a Viber call.

“We want to promote ecotourism. Would you swim on a beach beside a nuclear power plant?” she asked. “It will kill all beach resorts in Bataan. It’s incompatible with our vision.” — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

