

## **People's Tonight Editorial w/cartoon – Nuke Fallout**

As worries mount over the catastrophic effects of long-term radiation exposure, government agencies, including the Department of Health, would do well to closely monitor the impact of Japan's nuclear fallout on public health in the Philippines, where many poverty-stricken people die without seeing a doctor.

Although science and health authorities downplayed the possibility of radiation exposure in the country, we agree with Sen. Loren Legarda, an environmentalist who chairs the Senate committee on foreign relations and climate change, that concerned authorities and the public cannot afford to be complacent.

Legarda urged the DOH, the Philippine Nuclear Research Institute and the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council to exercise vigilance in preparing and providing for all possible contingencies.

PNRI said harmful levels of radiation from the Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant in Japan will not reach the country. But a study by the Norwegian Institute for Air Research revealed that there is a possibility that radiation will reach the Philippines if the crippled power plant melts down.

Without doubt, it is reassuring to note that the NDRRMC has put in place the National Radiological Preparedness and Response Plan (NRPRP) which the government will execute in the event that radiation from Japan reaches the country.

But there is a big question: Are the people, notably those in far-flung communities, educated about radiation and its possible health implications, which, in large doses, can cause cancer, birth defects and miscarriage for pregnant women?

Thus, we find merit in the proposal of Senator Legarda, a broadcast journalist before she joined the government service as a member of the Senate, to start informing the public on what this NRPRP is all about and what it entails.

Like the soft-spoken but highly-articulate lady lawmaker, we believe that a good plan is not enough. "Effective execution and the ability of the public to respond accordingly are key to saving lives in times of disaster," she pointed out.

The government cannot afford to let its guard down. Should the authorities, through concerned offices and agencies, fail to do their job of monitoring

radiation levels and putting in place a concrete plan of action, then we are in for more troubles and problems.

And since there are food safety issues, the authorities should also monitor the entry of Japanese products into the country. The situation in Japan remains to be a serious concern in the Philippines. These are facts that we cannot dismiss.