

## WELCOME HOME

## 158 DISTRESSED OFWS RETURN FROM EMIRATES

At least 158 distressed overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) arrived home on Sunday, according to the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA).

In a statement, the DFA said the OFWs—74 from Abu Dhabi

and 84 from Dubai—were mostly victims of human trafficking.

“These workers were found to have left the country using short-term visit visas and were promised to be issued with work visa by illegal recruiters. Many of them were overworked, suffered

maltreatment and experienced contract violations by their employer,” said Consul General to Dubai Paul Raymund Cortes.

Since January, more than 4,800 overseas Filipinos have been repatriated from the UAE. —**TINA G. SANTOS** INQ

## Tackling plastic wastes: effective solid waste management is key

The ongoing discussion on the problem of plastic wastes, universally recognized as one of the world's most pressing environmental concerns, yields a range of proposals that includes banning single-use plastics, taxing plastic straws, avoiding disposables, adopting ways of refilling and reusing, going package-free, and creating new packaging.

Contributing a holistic approach to the discussion, a paper on plastic wastes and solid waste management (SWM) published by the Stratbase ADR Institute for Strategic and International Studies concludes that waste mismanagement is at the bottom of the plastic wastes problem in the country.

The paper by Stratbase ADR Institute environmental fellow Vanessa Pepino, titled “A Balanced Approach to Solid Waste Management: Governance and Total Stakeholder Participation,” was presented recently by the author and Stratbase Deputy Managing Director Orlando Oxales at the third general membership meeting of the Philippine Chamber of Food Manufacturers, Inc. or PH Food Chamber, the principal organization of the manufacturers and distributors of food products in the country.

The paper noted that the Philippines has the most number of bans on plastic and Styrofoam, yet it generates the third largest volume of plastic debris in the ocean; waste mismanagement persists; the SWM system is inefficient and overstretched; policy approaches for plastic waste management are lacking and ineffective; and proposed policy interventions are one-sided.

Several factors behind the proliferation of waste plastics were cited: there are gaps in the waste collection system; solid waste management infrastructure systems and regulations are inadequate and outdated; consumer behavior is unregulated; there is an unsustainable linear approach to how waste is tackled; and there is low or no compliance with R.A. 9003 (the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2001), e.g. the prevalence of open littering, open dumpsites, and non-segregation.

The country's waste policy framework focuses mostly on plastic reduction, not on monitoring and incentive mechanisms and efficient SWM systems. “While waste generation is an inevitable environmental concern for growing economies like the Philippines, waste mismanagement is more pressing. Perhaps the policy questions must focus on (1) where the problem of unsustainable practice of plastic waste disposal occurs; and (2) how it should be addressed,” Ms. Pepino said in the paper.

She proposed the following policy interventions for plastic wastes management: putting in place quality SWM infrastructure systems, technology and sound regulations; improvement of collection services; increasing access to recycling materials recovery and waste treatment facilities; establishing more large-scale recycling facilities; strengthening governance and a circular approach in waste management; strict monitoring and enforcement of policies for households and companies; encouraging sustainable packaging that can be recycled; and building the support and participation of local communities.

PH Food Chamber President Elizabeth M. De Leon – Lim said, “We believe that collaborative and collective actions toward the complex and urgent issue of plastic wastes are necessary, requiring the involvement of all stakeholders in the public and the private sectors.”

“There is a need for various efforts: to innovate with respect to packaging materials; to level up solid waste management with a circular approach including collection, recovery and recycling; and to embrace attitudes and behaviors that eventually will bring about a waste-free environment,” she added.

“As food manufacturers, we recognize the importance of packaging which provides our consumers safe, high quality products that have reasonable shelf lives and are affordable, especially in an economy like ours. Therefore, we must exercise due care in the search for packaging alternatives,” Ms. Lim said.

# Digong studying nuke plant deal

By **Germelina Lacorte**  
@InqNational

DAVAO CITY—President Duterte said there was nothing definite about plans to put up nuclear power plants in cooperation with Russia because he still had to discuss the proposal with the Cabinet and Congress to ensure its legality.

“I [still] have to talk to [the] Cabinet. I can't affirm nor deny that it's part of the proposal,” Mr. Duterte said after Energy Secretary Alfonso Cusi signed an agreement with Russia's state nuclear power company to explore prospects of nuclear power plants.

### No details

The President declined to disclose details of the agreement and said “it was just a broad outline, nothing is definite yet.”

Cusi signed a memorandum of intent with Rusatom Overseas president Evgeny Pakermanov during the Philippine-Russia Business Forum.

“I can't talk without [talking with] the Cabinet because if there's something in that

agreement that would require the consent of Congress, then we have to go to Congress and argue our case,” he said.

### Open to nuclear power

As early as 2016, President Duterte had already expressed openness to adopting nuclear energy, including the possible revival of the controversial Bataan Nuclear Power Plant (BNPP).

In an interview last year, Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III said nuclear energy was “something we should really consider.”

Both Dominguez and the President had emphasized the need to ensure safety.

He also confirmed reports that Russia is also interested in oil exploration and natural gas in the West Philippine Sea but again declined to reveal details.

The Philippines' only foray into nuclear energy, the BNPP, fizzled out amid controversies regarding the plant's location as well as corruption issues hounding the Marcos regime's deal with Westinghouse Electric Co., the party that took

over General Electric in the \$2.2-billion project.

Amid these concerns, Marcos' successor, Corason Aquino, shelved the project indefinitely in 1986, but the country continued to pay for the foreign loans that funded the power plant years after the 1986 EDSA People Power Revolution that toppled Marcos.

There have since been several proposals to use nuclear energy to answer the country's increasing demand for power, including the revival of the mothballed plant.

But these plans have been met with opposition from groups that raised safety and environmental issues.

Such fears resurfaced following the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster caused by a 9-magnitude earthquake and tsunami that hit Japan.

Russia launched its pioneering nuclear power vessel, Akademik Lomonosov, in late August.

The ship began sailing on Aug. 23 through the Arctic on its way to Russia's Chukotka region off the Bering Strait across Alaska. INQ

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## Cathay Land launches its landmark Alabang project

Property developer Cathay Land expects property buyers and investors to have strong interest in the residential units of Ananda Square, since the project will be Alabang's newest commercial and residential landmark.

Strategically located along Alabang-Zapote Road in Las Piñas City, between SM South Mall and Robinsons Place Las Piñas, Ananda Square will host a supermarket, coffee shops, restaurants, banks and more retail choices in its three-floor mall.

Cathay Land President Jeffrey Ng expects that the promise of a new shopping mecca, and the prevailing real estate boom in the South — with prices of similar condominium projects hovering north of P200,000 per square meter — will give Ananda Square an edge among buyers and investors. Ananda Square is also just a few minutes from the Alabang central business district (CBD).

The first of Ananda Square's four towers is a 20-storey mixed-use building that will feature about 700 units and will be comprised mainly of studio units and 1-bedroom suites.

### Suite of Amenities

Cathay Land expects the amenities of Ananda Square to be another draw for investors. Pocket gardens allow for natural sunlight and fresh air to circulate within the tower. An open-air courtyard will serve as a communal area with beautiful sunrise and sunset views set amidst lush and verdant surroundings.

Ananda Square will likewise feature the Aquarium — a sparkling oasis that comes complete with a Pool Deck, a Lap and

a Kiddie Pool for those who want to bask under the Sun or swim a few laps.

Other amenities in the well-planned development are a study lounge for students who want a quiet place to do schoolwork and for avid readers to curl up with a book. The study lounge can also be a place for small meetings, but those who require bigger spaces can hold their gatherings at the Social Hall that can host banquets for special occasions.

All in all, Cathay Land expects these amenities to create a strong sense of community among Ananda Square residents.

### Attractive Pricing

Given Ananda Square's strategic location in the booming South, its vibrant strip mall and exciting suite of amenities, one may expect a stratospheric price. But no.

Ng announced that Cathay Land is starting off Ananda Square at a very attractive introductory price to give future residents and investors an opportunity to ride the continued

boom of the real estate sector in the South. “With our very attractive pricing, we are confident that we can tap a good mix of young professionals working in the Alabang CBD and beyond, those who are growing their families, and those who are looking to make investments in the South as it grows its commercial and industrial hubs even further.”

True enough, Ananda Square units start at a very attractive price: around P98,000 per square meter. A 24-sq.m. studio unit starts at P2.8 Million, whereas a 32.63-sq.m. 1-bedroom unit goes for up to P3.2 Million. Bigger spaces are available at the two penthouse floors where buyers have option to combine adjacent units.

Ng believes that “Now is the time” for aspiring homeowners and investors to take advantage of the growth opportunity that Ananda Square offers. For more information on Cathay Land's Ananda Square project, please call 878-0178 or visit [www.anandasquare.com](http://www.anandasquare.com).



Booming South: Cathay Land expects Ananda Square to be a new landmark in the South once completed. The mixed-use development features a strip mall and residential units.

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