

Opinion

Students deserve answer from GPA

Give the Guam Power Authority some credit: The power system has pretty much been fluke-free since the end of February, the deadline Gov. Joseph F. Ada set for ending the island's electricity problems.

Except that in its exuberance to get reserve generators churning, GPA apparently forgot to take a look around. Consider the plight of students at Harmon Loop School, who have had to breathe the exhaust from the new Macheche Substation generator.

Near-sightedness is nothing new to GPA. The utility failed to keep up with the growth that was going on all around it in the 1980s. Power rationing has become a common phenomenon, but was doubly worse in the final months of 1992 when typhoons added to the torment. Lest we forget the serious implications of the island's powerlessness at the hands of GPA, tourism has hit a running slump. Power problems alone are not to blame, but darkened streets, hot hotel rooms and stuck elevators will not be forgotten by those who have visited Guam.

Tourism is important, but not as high a priority as the well-being of our children. GPA and the governor have some serious explaining to do. How on earth could they allow a power plant to be built so close to a school that children get to inhale its exhaust?

The children at Harmon Loop School deserve an answer. And Guam deserves a power utility run by management with 20-20 vision.

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Harmon students want generator out

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What was supposed to be a hearing on three bills that would determine the locations of new substations in Umatac, Mangilao, Tamuing, Yigo and Dededo, instead turned into a gripe session about diesel exhaust fumes, black dust and headaches.

Five members of the legislative Committee on Housing and Community Development heard stories from parents, teachers



and students about the Macheche substation and generator, located next to the school.

"If we don't correct this problem now, we won't have future leaders because we'll be sending them to their graves early," said Terri Cruz, Harmon Loop principal. The Macheche generator was brought on-line March 5.

But the most moving testimony came from three third-grade students, who read aloud from prepared letters to the Legislature.

"I don't like the smell of the generator because it gave me a headache, and I was sick of the smell," Paul Superales said. "I want to smell clean air."

Cecelia Champion, reading specialist, told about her experience with the soot from the generator.

Walking outside with her class, she smelled the fumes and saw black dust on her skin. Later that day, she noticed that the skin was red. She was told that it was sulfuric acid poisoning, Champion said.

"I don't have any expertise," she said. But this is eating away at the lungs of the teachers and students here, she said.

After the discussion, senators opened the hearing to debate on Bill 359, which would lease land