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Editorial

Rotten system and policies aggravate El Niño's effects

The Filipino people, especially the peasant masses are incurring further losses and suffering more hardship so soon after the back to back calamities that hit them last year. Behind this is the early onset of an intense and prolonged dry spell brought about by El Niño.

The drought's effects on the people have been exceptionally fierce due to the rotten ruling system and antipeople policies that have paved the way for plunder by big foreign capitalists, compradors and bureaucrats. Worse, the ruling powers are not only inutile and guilty of criminal neglect in the face of calamities, they are exploiting the current disaster to profit themselves and their cohorts.

Hardest hit by the drought are some 750,000 hectares of rice fields, fishponds, grazing grounds, poultry and hog farms whose survival depends on a continuous supply of water. Most of these areas are in Northern Luzon, which is still reeling from the killer typhoons late last year. It is estimated that up to P10-20 billion worth of crops, fisheries and livestock will be damaged in the coming months.

The intensity of the drought's effects is due mainly to the longstanding destruction of natural water resources. Rivers, mangroves, springs, wells and other sources of water have either dried up or receded because of the relentless plunder of our mountain and forest resources by big mining and logging companies. The peasant masses have thus been deprived of traditional water reserves for their fields, fisheries and livestock.



Worse, the big capitalist owners of dams are now denying farmers irrigation water because they would rather use the limited dam water for power generation, their main source of income. They couldn't care less about the destruction being wrought by the drought on agricultural lands.

The operation of dams primarily for profit came about with their privatization in accordance with the imperialist-dictated policies of liberalization, denationalization and deregulation. After the Arroyo regime approved the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (EPIRA) in 2001, the operations of almost all big dams were taken over by foreign companies and their comprador business partners.

Even as foreigners and big capitalists are given free rein to commit plunder and rake in huge profits, the ruling system has completely neglected the people's interests and allowed the local economy to rot. The backwardness of the country's agriculture has once more come to the fore with the damage being in-

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flicted by the severe drought.

Particularly striking is the utter insufficiency and dilapidated condition of public irrigation infrastructure. Less than half of all rice fields nationwide have access to irrigation. The vast majority of poor peasants depend on rainfall. Most of the existing public irrigation infrastructure are useless. Less than half of them are actually able to supply water, since funds for their repair and maintenance are pocketed by corrupt big bureaucrat capitalists.

Although El Niño's onslaught has long been predicted, the reactionary regime has failed to prepare for it. The ruling regime's measures to assist the peasant masses now that the dry spell has struck come too little and too late. The regime has not utilized its powers to oblige dam operators to allot and release water for irrigation. Its cloud-seeding operations have become useless and are a waste of money. It is now resorting to public relations gimmicks such as the construction of artesian wells and the distribution of water pipes and subsidizing seeds and fertilizer. The ruling regime's candidates are riding on such gimmickry for their

electoral campaign.

Worse, the Arroyo government is exploiting the drought to step up the liberalization of rice, corn and feed imports. Importations coursed through the National Food Authority (NFA) have long been a lucrative source of corruption. This situation is sure to worsen now that the regime's big businessmen cronies have been given the go-signal to engage in importation. This will also give these big businessmen greater control over the price and supply of rice and other products.

All this will be to the detriment of the peasant masses and the Filipino people. On the one hand, there are fears that the planned importation of three million metric tons of rice will further depress local palay prices and cause the peasant masses to suffer further financial ruin. On the other hand, with the big compradors in complete control of rice supplies, expect them to seize every opportunity to raise rice prices in the local market.

In the face of all this, the Filipino people must take action to roundly condemn the ruling reactionary state for its ill-preparedness, for its neglect and for its cor-

ruption and greed in exploiting the current calamity. The people must demand what is rightfully theirs and hold their rulers to account for the severe losses they now suffer on top of their wretched poverty and hunger.


The people must also prepare to wage effective resistance against the ruling regime's possible resort to emergency rule and stepped up repression in the face of the deteriorating situation and rising people's movements.

We must resolutely advance the revolutionary struggle, which is the only decisive means of ending the people's suffering under a corrupt ruling regime and backward social system.

The times demand the invigoration of land reform, the cooperatives movement, various forms of mutual assistance and other measures for the immediate and long-term welfare of the people within revolutionary areas and their environs.

To demonstrate effective leadership over the masses in dealing with disasters is part of the responsibility of the Party and the New People's Army (NPA). Under their leadership, the revolutionary forces and the organized people, especially in areas affected by severe drought are taking prompt action to mitigate its most deleterious effects, especially on production.

The masses in the revolutionary areas are being mobilized in tandem with units of the NPA to cooperate in building and repairing communal irrigation systems. They have likewise been cooperating in setting up small communal dams and digging wells. They are also studying ways by which the people could shift to alternative sources of livelihood and plant crops that are capable of surviving drought and intense heat. **AB**

	
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State neglect of peasants and fisherfolk assailed

PEASANTS and fisherfolk assailed the Arroyo government for neglecting to address the worsening effects of the prolonged drought brought about by El Niño. Three hundred peasants, most of them hailing from as far as Cagayan province picketed the offices of the Department of Agriculture (DA) on March 5. Their main complaint was the agency's laggard action on their ruined crops. They said that they had received no assistance whatsoever from the DA's P1.7 billion fund for victims of El Niño.

The protest action was part of a week-long series of mass actions carried out by progressive organizations like the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (PAMALAKAYA) and the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) to demand that the Arroyo government disburse this fund.

Earlier, on March 2, some 200 fisherfolk from communities surrounding Laguna de Bay picketed the DA. They dumped water lilies in front of the DA building and lambasted DA Secretary Arthur Yap for withholding the fund earmarked for El Niño victims. They said that the fund must be released to ease the effect of the prolonged drought which has reduced water levels at the 90,000-hectare Laguna de Bay. AB

Irrigation fund all dried up

IRRIGATION has not improved in the span of nine years under the Arroyo regime despite the fact that the Department of Agriculture sets aside a large portion (33%) of its budget for this purpose.

An investigation by the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) on the P3.7 billion fund purportedly earmarked for the repair of irrigation systems in 2007 revealed that none of its regional chapters nationwide reported any repairs conducted on irrigation systems or funds released for this purpose by the National Irrigation Administration. The KMP also discovered that practically the entire fund was used for the Arroyo clique's campaign in 2007. AB

Exploiting the energy crisis

POWER generators, especially in Mindanao have been breaking down and operating way below capacity due to the grave shortage of water supplies in dams. The US-Arroyo regime intends to exploit the situation and use it as a pretext to declare an energy crisis and invoke emergency powers with the blessings of the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (EPIRA).

As it was during the Ramos regime, unscrupulous officials of the Arroyo government will once again pocket hefty kickbacks as the regime resorts to building or leasing additional power generation facilities. The government will be forking out an estimated P10 billion on these projects. The situation is expected to lead to tighter control by private power producers over power generation and to higher electricity bills. AB

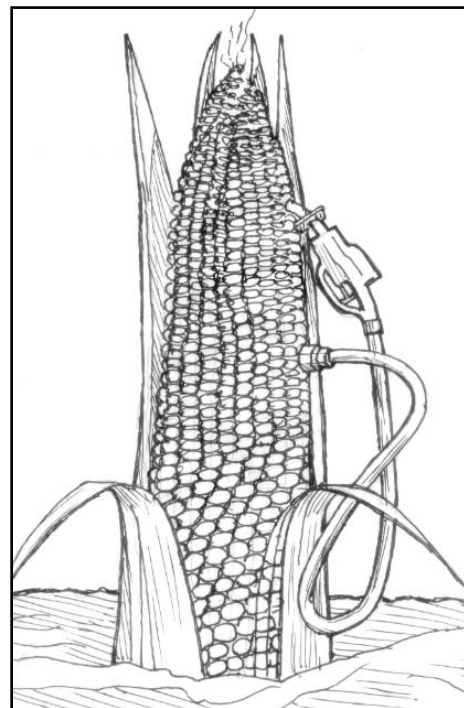
Local and foreign capitalists feast off biofuel industry

The flurry of foreign and local capitalists to invest in the production of biofuel in the country is leading to extensive land grabbing and the plunder of natural resources. As a result, opposition and resistance by various sectors of the people to biofuel projects propelled by the Arroyo government itself is gaining ground.

Based on data from the Philippine Agricultural Development and Commercial Corp. (PADC) as of September 2009, there are 40 foreign and local companies that have invested P83 billion in 49 biofuel projects in the country since 2007. Up to P40.8 billion of this was used to build plantations for jatropha, cassava, coconut, sugarcane,

hybrid corn, rice and sorghum while P42.5 billion was used for the construction of processing plants.

These foreign companies and their local partners presently control more than four million hectares of land in different areas of the country where their sprawling plantations and distill-



eries are located. For example, the Pacific Bio-Field Corporation of Japan controls 600,000 hectares of land in Ilocos Norte. Meanwhile, in northeastern Luzon, LA Investment Capital of the US built more than 100,000 hectares of jathropa plantations in the provinces of Cagayan, Isabela, Nueva Vizcaya, Quirino, Nueva Ecija and Quezon. In various parts of Mindanao, NRG Chemical Engineering, a British company, controls a jathropa plantation of more than a million hectares and the Abundant Resources Corporation, an American company, controls another jathropa plantation in Bukidnon of more than 100,000 hectares. The Arroyo regime is also currently scouting for sites on which to build a million hectare plantation of hybrid rice, corn and sorghum for Chinese biofuel companies. This is among the provisions of 11 agreements signed by the Arroyo regime with China in 2007 in exchange for a loan.

Imperialist countries like the US, Japan and members of the European Union are pressing for the expansion of the biofuel industry in the Philippines. The big capitalists are riding on calls for the development of alternative fuels in the face of their principal cul-

pability for climate change worldwide.

Also in keeping with the dictates of US imperialism, the Arroyo regime is obsequiously implementing the Biofuel Act of 2007 which requires that all gasoline sold within the country be mixed with 10% ethanol by 2010 and that diesel-fed vehicles must also switch to biodiesel.

People's opposition and resistance. The Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (PAMALAKAYA) formally demanded in July 2009 that the government of Japan scrap the 600,000-hectare biofuel project of the Pacific Bio-Diesel Corp in the town of Pagudpud, Ilocos Norte as well as the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement under whose framework this project is being undertaken. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines also appealed to the Arroyo government to junk this project because it denies land to the small fisherfolk and peasants who have little or no land.

The agreement calls for the Japanese biodiesel company and its local associates to deliver biodiesel products for the Japanese public's consumption and not for Filipinos. PAMALAKAYA national

chair Fernando Hicap said that instead of the Arroyo government implementing genuine agrarian reform for the Filipino peasant masses, 70% of whom have little or no land to till, it is allowing Japan to lease vast agricultural lands for 25 years. Japan also has the option to extend the contract for another 25 years.

Former CBCP president Archbishop Angel Lagdameo also criticized the project because the 600,000 hectares of land allotted for it already comprises more than half of the entire target of the government's CARP (Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program).

Prior to this, in 2008, the people of the third district of Negros Oriental exposed and staunchly fought the Tamlang Valley Agricultural Development Corp (TVADC) as an instrument of land grabbing by big comprador bourgeoisie and landlords in the province. The protest was led by the District Farmers Alliance (DFA). (*See related article*).

In the face of rampant land-grabbing using biofuel projects as a pretext, the people have no other recourse but to persistently and steadfastly expose and resist the antipeasant and antipeople biofuels law. AB

The Tamlang Valley Agricultural Development Corporation

Tamlang Valley in Negros Oriental is one of the areas in the country where biofuel projects were first implemented. A distillery as well as a jathropa and cassava plantation were built in this valley, financed with a P2 billion investment. It comprises 24,116 hectares of land in several barrios and sitios of the towns of Siaton, Valencia, Sibulan and Sta. Catalina. Relatedly, a P1.8 billion energy plant is also being constructed in San Carlos City, Negros Occidental managed by the San Carlos Bioenergy Corp.

In order to implement this project, the Tamlang Valley Agricultural Development Corp. (TVADC) was created under the initiative of former Congressman Herminio Teves and his associate Julio Sy. Teves and Sy own 65% of the corporation while 35% is owned by the local government. Through his political influence, Teves leased 24,115 hectares of land from the DENR in 2006. The lease contract was approved without going through a public hearing.

The peasants were required to enter into two agreements—contract farming and corporate farming.

Under contract farming, the peasants are granted a loan of P15,000 per hectare allegedly to provide them with funds for planting. After every harvest, the TVADC purchases their products. The peasants are supposed to pay off their debts from their earnings from the sale.

Under corporate farming, TVADC shoulders all expenses and leases land from the landowner or the government for only P500 per hectare per year. If the peasants work on the land, they will be paid P160 per day.

To ensure the implementation of this project and squelch opposition from the residents, the company has been utilizing the AFP's 61st Bravo Company, CAGFU elements and intelligence agents to launch sustained operations since July 26, 2007.

The project has been forcibly carried out at the expense of the peasants' suffering. The peasants have experienced great hardship and dislocation because of blatant and legal land grabbing. For example, if they default on their debts, their land could be confiscated. They also have no control over what crops to plant and ultimately end up becoming mere farm workers on their own land. Human rights violations committed by the fascist military are also rampant.

Since the second half of 2008, the peasants have started banding together to fight this project. They have been launching widespread education campaigns about this particular issue. The peasants formed various organizations and launched unified actions like dialogues, meetings, petitions, rallies and the like. They are demanding the implementation of genuine land reform as the key solution to the peasants' land problem. AB

Activists flail rewards for Morong 43 captors

As expected, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) hailed and rewarded its officers who illegally arrested 43 health workers on February 6 in Morong, Rizal as they were carrying out a medical training. The victims, who were accused of being members of the New People's Army were allegedly conducting a training on bomb-making.

The Health Alliance for Democracy (HEAD), the families of those dubbed the "Morong 43", their sympathizers and militant lawmakers strongly condemned the military's conferment of the Bronze Cross medal, the fourth highest military award, to Col. Aurelio Baladad and Lt. Col. Jaime Abawag on February 23 at Camp Nakar, Lucena, Quezon.

They said that the illegal raid and capture of the 43 health workers followed by the torture and violation of the human rights of the victims are a blatant disregard of due process and must be denounced. Instead of bestowing awards or medals upon military officers who are clearly violating human rights, they should be charged and imprisoned.

The dispensing of rewards to those who glaringly violate human rights has been a long time policy of the US-Arroyo regime. It will be remembered that Gloria Arroyo praised and swiftly promoted Gen. Jovito Palparan, Jr. in 2006. From colonel, Palparan was promoted to brigadier general in 2003 and became a major general in 2004. Despite his record as an active practitioner of extrajudicial killings in his areas of assignment, he was made chief of the 8th ID in Eastern Visayas and of the 7th ID in Central Luzon. Arroyo even shamelessly praised this butcher during her 2006 State of the Nation Address.

Jonas Burgos' abductors Noel Clement, Melquiades Feliciano and Edison Cagal were also promoted to colonels. Other military elements who were given awards or medals or sent to military schools abroad due to their execution of orders that glaringly violated human rights are Gen. Delfin Bangit, ISAFP chief when the "Hello Garci" scandal occurred and Col. Oscar Lactao, former chief of the military unit that massacred nine peasants in Kananga, Leyte in April 2003. AB





Anti-mining activist slain in Cagayan

Gensun Agustin, 30, was shot dead before reaching his home in the afternoon of March 1 in Barangay Calamegatan, Buguey, Cagayan. Agustin is a member of the Alliance for Buguey Community Advocates (Albuca-da) and the Federation of Anti-Mining Advocates in Cagayan (Famac), organizations fighting illegal mining in the province. Agustin was riding home on his motorcycle when he was shot by two people aboard another motorcycle.

Magnetite mining interests in the province were known to be hostile to Agustin and his colleagues. Magnetite is extracted from the black sands along the Cagayan coastline. Environmental activists are worried that the province will be endangered by the continued extraction of magnetite because it is this element that bonds the sand together. The loss of magnetite could cause flooding in the province.

Meanwhile, KARAPATAN-Negros and the September 21 Movement alliance condemned the attempted murder of Ronaldo Capitanea, 23, public information officer of the Camindangan Small Farmers Association (CASFA), a member organization of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP). The perpetrator of this latest harassment has been identified as the Philippine Army 61st IB death squad.

Capitanea was shot by two men wearing ski masks on February 22 in Hacienda Mabuhay, Barangay Gil Montilla, Sipalay City, Negros Occidental. He was aboard his "habal-habal" motorcycle picking up a teacher who is his regular passenger when he was shot by two people riding a black DT motorcycle. The peasant leader is now in a hospital in Bacolod City and recovering from his wounds.

According to KARAPATAN-Negros secretary general Fred Cana, Capitanea's shooting is part of the military's systematic campaign to silence members of progressive organizations. AB

Peasants harassed in Negros Occidental

KARAPATAN-Negros strongly denounced the ongoing harassment of peasants in Barangay Minautok, Calatrava, Negros Occidental. The victims are members of Pakigdaet sa Kalambuan sa Sitio Kambayugo, which is an affiliate of the National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW). The harassment has to do with an agrarian case and is being perpetrated by the despotic Lumayno landlord family's armed groups.

On February 19, former Philippine Constabulary element and Lumayno henchman Raul Baterna shot at and injured sisters Cresencia Jumawan and Lucia Nativo in Sitio Minauyahan.

Jumawan and Nativo were objecting to the destruction of their root crops by the Lumaynos' tractor. Baterna then struck Jumawan in the neck. Witnesses said Baterna also fired his handgun several times. Nativo attempted to come to her sister's rescue but was also beaten by Baterna and five men from the Jacua Security Agency. The Jacua guards fired their guns to prevent other villagers from approaching as the tractor continued destroying the crops. According to KARAPATAN-Negros, the Lumayno family had several cases of human rights violations last year. One such case is the murder of Reynaldo Bucaling, a farmer and the killing of six carabaos owned by residents in the area. On January 15, 2010, Rodolfo Lumayno, barangay captain of Minautok along with guards from Jacua fired their guns to terrorize the peasants and prevent them from tilling the land.

These abuses were repeated on February 6, 7, and 9. Aside from Baterna and the Jacua guards, elements of the bandit group Revolutionary Proletarian Army (RPA) have also been harassing the peasants. AB

Military harasses student leaders

MILITARY elements have been harassing Chaser Soriano, 4th year Psychology student at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP) in Sta. Mesa, Manila. Soriano is a candidate for Central Student Council president at PUP

under the Sandigan ng Mag-aaral para sa Sambayanan (SAMASA) and chair of Anakbayan-PUP.

For several weeks, Soriano was being shadowed by military men in civilian clothes. One day, he spotted his tail. The man who was fol-

lowing him suddenly motioned as if pointing a gun at Soriano. On February 19, while he was on the way home, Soriano was approached by a man riding a motorcycle. When So-

Continued on "Military..." on page 7

Justice for the victims of the Hacienda Luisita Massacre

The victims of the Hacienda Luisita Massacre will attain justice but not under the regime of Liberal Party standard bearer Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino III. This is the view expressed by the family and relatives of 14 peasants who were slain when they were fired upon by military elements, police and the hacienda’s private guards in the middle of their strike on November 16, 2004.

Distorting facts, sowing intrigue. This early, a pall has already been cast over the justice they desire due to the distortion of the facts surrounding the massacre. Corazon “Dinky” Soliman, a then diligent acolyte of Gloria Arroyo and now one of Noynoy

Aquino’s campaigners said with a straight face that “only two” were killed in the massacre at Hacienda Luisita.

Noynoy Aquino’s sister “Pinky” Aquino-Abellada would also have the public believe that it was not the police and military serving as their armed guards who were responsible for the “disturbance” at Hacienda Luisita. Sowing intrigue, she claimed that two of the victims had gunshot wounds in the back.

Meaning, they were allegedly shot by their fellow strikers.

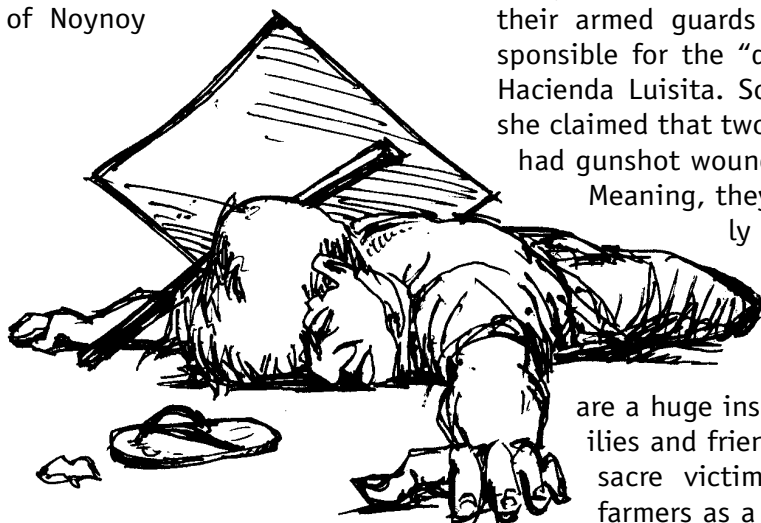
These statements are a huge insult to the families and friends of the massacre victims and to the farmers as a whole who are

struggling for genuine agrarian reform. They contradict media reports, witnesses’ sworn statements and the results of the investigation conducted after the massacre.

Soliman and Abellada’s statements are a desperate attempt to cover up the culpability and connivance of the Cojuangco-Aquino family and the Arroyo regime in circumventing the implementation of genuine agrarian reform on 4,915.75 hectares of the 6,443-hectare hacienda. They are also attempts to make it appear that it is the hacienderos, their armed personnel and powerful relatives and allies in government who are the ones oppressed by the peasants and farm workers.

Even before the bloody confrontation at Hacienda Luisita took place, the Mendiola massacre took place on January 22, 1987 under the regime of Corazon Cojuangco-Aquino. More than 5,000 peasants marching towards Malacañang to demand the implementation of genuine land reform from the Aquino regime were fired upon by armed agents of a government posturing as liberal-democratic. After the barrage of gunfire, 13 peasants were dead and more than a hundred rallyists were wounded. None of the perpetrators has answered for this massacre.

Seventeen years later, another bloodbath took place when the Hacienda Luisita Inc. (HLI) management attempted to enforce the Department of Labor’s (DOLE) return-to-work order on the strikers. The Cojuangco-Aquino family obtained Assumption of Jurisdiction and return-to-work orders from DOLE because the Aquinos had a direct line then to Arroyo. The strikers refused to follow DOLE’s order. Even though they were merely armed with placards, stones and slingshots, the



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riano noticed him, he immediately turned around and continued walking. However, his stalker caught up with him, pointed a gun at him and snatched his cellphone. The soldier then threatened that something bad would happen to him if Soriano did not quit being a student leader.

Before this, two other members of progressive organizations at PUP were being surveilled and harrassed by the military. The first was tailed when he boarded a jeep and within hearing range of the other passengers, the activist was threatened by the two military elements. The activist immediately ran in order to avoid the two agents. In the second case, a military man suddenly put his arm around an activist’s shoulders and pointed a gun at him while the activist was at a local hangout near their school. He was also warned to stop his activities in the organization.

Anakbayan condemned the harassment of the student leaders at PUP and other universities.

AB



strikers and their supporters from the barrios within the hacienda stood up for their rights. They fought two military tanks, 17 trucks full of soldiers, 700 policemen, a pay loader, four firetrucks and snipers positioned at strategic areas. After the composite force of policemen, soldiers and HLI guards fired a thousand rounds, 14 strikers lay dead and 121 others were wounded.

Severe criticism from within and outside the country pushed Arroyo to form Task Force Luisita under the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) to investigate the issues that gave rise to the massacre. Anticipating a DAR decision favorable to the peasants and farm workers, the Cojuangco-Aquino family filed a petition before the Supreme Court to block its release. The Supreme Court issued a temporary restraining order (TRO) on DAR's issuance and enforcement of its findings that HLI's current Stock Distribution Option (SDO) violates the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program.

Extrajudicial killings. The strikers returned to their picket line after burying the victims of the Hacienda Luisita massacre. Not

long after, however, their supporters were killed one by one. From December 8, 2004 to October 3, 2006, eight persons were murdered for reasons related to the Hacienda Luisita case:

- ◆ Marcelino Beltran, a retired Philippine Army officer turned peasant leader. He was scheduled to testify before the Senate and Lower House about the massacre when he was shot in his home on December 8, 2004.

- ◆ Counciller Abel Ladera of Tarlac City, who led the procession of relatives of the massacre victims. He was gunned down on March 5, 2005 while purchasing spare parts at an auto supply shop.

- ◆ Fr. William Tadena, a priest of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI). He regularly mobilized his parish to help the strikers. He was shot while driving his jeep along the highway in La Paz, Tarlac on March 13, 2005.

- ◆ Ben "Tatang" Concepcion, a 67-year old leader of the Anakpawis party in Pampanga who actively supported the strikers. He was gunned down in his son's house in Angeles City on March 17, 2005.

- ◆ Flor Collantes, Bayan Muna-Tarlac secretary general. He was shot dead in his canteen on October 15, 2005.

- ◆ Ric Ramos, president of the Central Azucarera de Tarlac (CATLU). He was sniped at in his house in Mapalacsiao, Tarlac City on October 25, 2005. He and his friends were then celebrating the DOLE's newly issued decision ordering the Cojuangco family to give the peasants their back pay for each day they were on strike.

- ◆ Tirso Cruz, one of the directors of the United Luisita Workers Union (ULWU). He was shot six times while heading home with his father and two brothers on March 17, 2006.

- ◆ IFI Supreme Bishop Alberto Ramento. He was stabbed to death while sleeping in his room on October 3, 2006.

Besides these eight victims, strikers George Loveland and Ernesto Ramos were also fired upon at the west gate of the Las Hacienda Subdivision (inside Hacienda Luisita). They were hit in the chest and stomach but survived and identified the perpetrators as civilian-clad bodyguards of then Rep. Noynoy Aquino. AB

Maneuvers of the Ampatuan clan

The Ampatuan clan has been scheming to pay off witnesses and families of the victims of the Maguindanao massacre or settle the case out of court. According to Atty. Nena Santos, Esmael Mangudadatu's lawyer, several of the prosecution's witnesses are being bribed by representatives of the Ampatuan family to weaken the case against the 19 members of the Ampatuan clan who have been charged with multiple murder due to the deaths of 57 people, including 32 members of the media.

To pressure witnesses and delay the trial, lawyers of the Ampatuan family have filed several motions be-

fore the court. At the same time, they have been trying to convince the victims' families to agree to the settlement.

Because of the various motions filed by the Ampatuans' lawyers, the trial has been indefinitely suspended pending their resolution.

Meanwhile, the Initiatives for International Dialogues (IID), a peace advocacy group has strongly recommended that the government hasten the implementation of laws regarding crimes against humanity such as genocide.

The IID said in a statement that even though Glo-

ria Arroyo has signed Republic Act 9851 or the Crimes Against International Humanitarian Law, Genocide and Other Crimes against Humanity Act, after more than two months, her regime has not yet printed it in two newspapers of wide circulation or in the *Official Gazette*. As a result, it has not been implemented.

The reactionary constitution stipulates that a law can only take effect after it has been printed in these publications.

According to IID executive director Gus Miclat, this law defends the rights of persons during election time against threats and terror by private armies and other types of extortion or pressure, violence or harassment.

In 2001, up to 80% of cases of election-related violence were committed by private armies. There were 132 cases recorded in 2001. In 2002, as many as 188 persons became victims of election violence and in 2007, 158 also became victims. In 2009, the most prominent case of election-related violence was the Maguindanao massacre which was perpetrated by the Ampatuan clan's private army.

Meanwhile, the families of media persons who were victims of the Maguindanao massacre criticized the special treatment being given by the military to Andal S. Ampatuan, Sr. The former Maguindanao governor is facing multiple murder charges.

He has been detained at a military hospital since December 6 even though the ailments he has been complaining about do not require hospitalization. The families of the massacre victims are demanding that the elder Ampatuan be locked up in prison as well. AB



NPA launches two military actions in Bulacan

The New People's Army (NPA) launched consecutive military actions in Bulacan in the first week of March. The first was a punitive action against a rabid criminal element and counterrevolutionary. This was followed by the simultaneous raids and closures of two companies that have been banes to the environment.

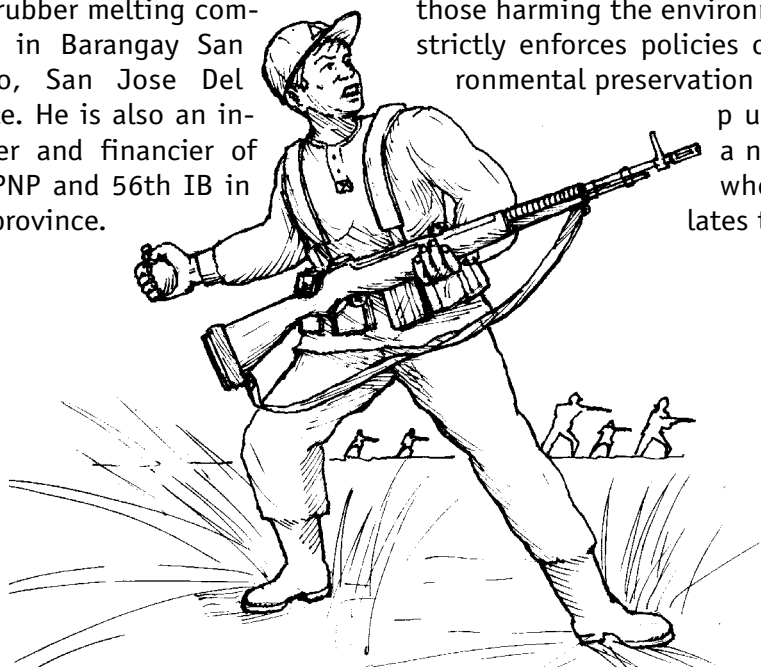
On March 2, the NPA arrested and meted the death penalty on Genaro Aguirre on orders of the people's revolutionary court. Aguirre was involved in a series of rapes, abductions, killings and landgrabbing against peasants in the towns of San Jose Del Monte and Norzagaray, both in Bulacan. He was also the protector of the WACUMAN Sanitary Landfill, a company based in Sitio Takad, Barangay San Mateo, Norzagaray. The company ruins the environment through illegal waste disposal. Aguirre is also the protector of a rubber melting company in Barangay San Isidro, San Jose Del Monte. He is also an informer and financier of the PNP and 56th IB in the province.

Aguirre fought back when an NPA team surrounded his house, which resulted in his death. Seized from him were a rifle and several pistols.

Also on the morning of March 3, an NPA platoon simultaneously raided the WACUMAN company owned by Domingo Miralles and a rubber melting factory in Area 1 Karahome in Norzagaray owned by a Chinese businessman. They were both closed down by the NPA.

The residents have long been complaining about these companies due to the destruction of the environment in their area. They previously brought their grievances to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the local government but neither of them took action and even protect the companies. According to the NPA-Bulacan, their units are ready to protect the people in the province against those harming the environment. It strictly enforces policies on environmental preservation and will

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Victorious NPA ambushes

Eleven soldiers of the 23rd Division Reconnaissance Company (DRC) were killed and seven more were seriously wounded in an ambush launched by the New People's Army (NPA) on March 6 in Barangay Panaytayan, Mansalay, Oriental Mindoro. A platoon of enemy troops led by 2Lt. Ronnie Sipsip was on foot patrol when ambushed by Red fighters at around 5:30 a.m. This is the largest number of military casualties so far this year.

Agusan del Sur. Four soldiers

from a composite force of the 26th IB, 23rd IB and the 4th ID Civil Military Operations were killed, including a lieutenant when they were waylaid by Red fighters of NPA Guerrilla Front 3 in Barangay La Fortuna, Veruela on the evening of February 24. Three more soldiers were wounded in this ambush.

The enemy troops were aboard two military trucks from



Barangay Bacay and were on the way to Barangay Sta. Josefa when they were attacked by the people's guerrillas.

Compostela Valley.

A soldier of the 25th IB was killed and two more wounded when they clashed with Red fighters of NPA Guerrilla Front 20 in Sitio Panon, Barangay Baylo, Monkayo

on March 5.

AB

2 million ballots for ARMM lack security marks

NEARLY two million ballots printed for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) lack National Printing Office (NPO) security marks. The anomaly, which is feared to have been done deliberately for purposes of committing fraud in the upcoming election was confirmed by an NPO insider.

This anomaly was also confirmed by a COMELEC report received by Archbishop Oscar Cruz and Fr. Jose Dizon of the Kontra-Daya coalition.

It is the NPO's policy that any official document it prints must possess the agency's security marks to make it easier to determine its authenticity should questions arise. An NPO employee said that the marks were absent on the ballots for the ARMM due to some problems with the printing machine. It was allegedly unable to correct the error due to time constraints.

Archbishop Cruz said that these ballots are useless due to the lack of the necessary security marks. It would be easy for election cheats to copy these ballots in order to manipulate the results of the country's first-ever automated elections. This is worrisome especially since the ARMM provinces are notorious for being bastions of fraud in the entire history of the country's reactionary elections. It was also in that region that the Arroyo administration was able to execute the biggest scams in the 2004 and 2007 elections.

Kontra-Daya is now demanding that these ballots be burned in public to prevent their use in electoral fraud. AB

Progressives slam mockery of party-list system

PROGRESSIVE lawmakers and organizations condemned the travesty being committed against the party-list system with the planned participation of Rep. Mikey Arroyo of Pampanga and Dept. of Energy Sec. Angelo Reyes. According to Bayan Muna Rep. Teddy Casiño, just anyone is being permitted to become nominees of party-list groups even though they do not genuinely represent any aggrieved sector or group.

Reyes is the first nominee of 1-Utak which is a party-list group representing the transportation sector while Arroyo is a nominee of the group Ang Galing Party (AGP) supposedly representing drivers and security guards.

These organizations are just a few of the fake party-list groups set up by Malacañang in its mad scramble to land positions in Congress and block progressive groups and genuine representatives of aggrieved sectors.

Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo vowed to push for changes in the Party-List Law in order to block such groups. Bayan Muna will also file a disqualification case against Arroyo and Reyes before the Commission on Elections.

Sison, NDFP send condolences on Jose "Apeng" Yap's passing

PROF. Jose. Ma. Sison and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) expressed their condolences on the death of Rep. Jose Yap, 81, whom they saluted for his great contributions to the peace negotiations between the reactionary government and the revolutionary movement.

Sison described Yap as a dear personal friend and a political ally with a high sense of patriotism and social conscience. Sison and the NDFP recognized Yap's singular efforts in serving the country as a mayor, legislator, cabinet member, national executive and provincial governor.

They cited Yap's important role

in forging The Hague Joint Declaration in 1992 which has since served as the fundamental framework or foundation agreement for the peace negotiations. They also cited Yap's role in surmounting various obstacles in the talks, saying it helped in no small way that he enjoyed a large measure of trust and confidence from both panels.

The NDFP Negotiating Panel praised Yap's unerring diligence to achieve through the talks a peaceful solution to the armed conflict in the Philippines. "Whenever he spoke with us, we knew and felt that he was seeking in earnest to negotiate a peaceful and just res-

olution of the conflict and not seek our capitulation or surrender."

The NDFP also noted their shared view with Yap that the roots of the armed conflict must be resolved so as to achieve just and lasting peace in the country.

Sison also expressed his regret that the Estrada and Arroyo regimes did not fully utilize Yap's services in advancing the peace talks. "Whoever will follow as GRP president should extol and emulate what Rep. Jose V. Yap has done in the peace negotiations and in the forging of just and fair agreements for the benefit of the people," he further added.

NDFP pays tribute to Josie Lichauco

THE National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) Peace Panel, as well as its consultants and staff paid tribute to Josefina "Josie" Lichauco who passed away on February 14 at the age of 75. Lichauco was a former cabinet member under the Aquino and Ramos regimes and was active in the protest movement. NDFP Negotiating Panel chair Ka Luis G. Jalandoni said that the death of a true friend to the Fil-

ipino people, a courageous and determined fighter for justice, human rights and good governance is an immense loss.

The NDFP hailed Lichauco as a fearless critic of government corruption. Lichauco was among Gloria Arroyo's leading critics. She also resolutely stood against extrajudicial killings and other human rights violations by the regime.

IMF's dictates for the country's next president

THE national elections in May 2010 have yet to take place, but the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is already dictating the financial policies of the country's next president. According to the IMF's latest Country Report, the new president of the Philippines should expand government revenues, primarily by exacting additional taxes.

The IMF intends to deploy a fiscal assistance team to the country to formulate strategies on how the next government that will assume

office in July 2010 can generate new tax revenues. This was one of the commitments entered into by Gloria Arroyo last year when she contracted new loans from the IMF.

The Philippines currently owes the IMF-WB \$52 billion. Debt service eats up 70% of the country's income.

After the IMF released its Country Report, Liberal Party presidential candidate Benigno "Noy" Aquino III said on March 1 that he will most likely impose new taxes

should he become the country's next president. This is a sudden turnabout from a pledge he made in January before Makati businessmen that he would not do so. He was the only presidential candidate who postured that he would resist the dictates of imperialist banks.

The IMF has called on the next administration to convince Congress to enact new tax measures. The IMF has, among others, been pressing for higher taxes on tobacco, alcohol and other beverages.