

ANG

Pahayagan ng Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas
Pinapatnubayan ng Marxismo-Leninismo-Maoismo

Bayan

English Edition
Vol XLV No. 12
June 21, 2014

www.philippinerevolution.net

Editorial

Junk CARP and build the revolutionary strength of the peasantry!

The Aquino regime is currently pushing the two-year extension of the bogus Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program or CARP.

Even if the peasant masses have clearly repudiated CARP because it is a sham, its extension will be one of the items on top of the regime's agenda in the upcoming resumption of Congress.

It is a huge irony for a president from the landlord class to push for land reform. But there is no irony in a landlord president gunning for land reform if the latter is bogus, and especially if it can be a means of stealing billions of pesos.

The state plans to allot P150 billion for CARP's two-year extension—the same amount budgeted for CARP in the last five years. The amount will allegedly be used to "compensate" landlords and provide support services to farmer-beneficiaries.

In the same way the Cojuangco-Aquino clan was overpaid for Hacienda Luisita (receiving P471 million instead of P304 million), the excessive "compensation" given to landlords has been a means by which bureaucrat capitalists have pocketed gigantic amounts.

The monies allotted

for the planned two-year CARP extension will also be a source of Napoles-type graft such as those involving Aquino's agriculture officials.

The CARP extension is likewise a way for bureaucrats to raise funds for the 2016 elections. If Gloria Arroyo was able to make money through the fake distribution of fertilizer in 2004, the CARP extension is one of the means by which Aquino expects to raise a big election fund that will enable his clique to remain in power beyond 2016.

In its 26 years of existence, CARP fulfilled no other role than to deceive the peasantry, profit from their poverty and landlessness and lay down the legal framework that would enable landlords to regain and retain vast tracts of land, or transfer ownership to real estate companies, plantations or mining firms and other imperialist or bourgeois comprador businesses. Currently, up to 60%



of Certificates of Land Ownership Award have already been revoked. With so many other pending cases for CARP exemption, land reclassification and land-use conversion, even more landholdings are set to be repossessed by landlords or prevented from ever being included in the Department of Agrarian Reform's useless "notices of coverage." The peasant masses have long been opposed to CARP. Twenty-six years of CARP implementation have proven that it has no objective other than to preserve big landlords' monopoly ownership of land.

The highest level achieved by the legal peasant movement is direct land occupation and the opening of collective farms. Led by the strong and militant open peasant movement, the peasant masses have attained a number of victories in asserting their right to till and reside in the land they have enriched with their toil. Some notable examples are the collective farms (bungkalan) in Hacienda Luisita

and the "land cultivation areas" (LCA) in Negros and Southern Tagalog. Legal peasant struggles have undoubtedly played an invaluable role in further accelerating organizing efforts and invigorating the open peasant movement. Nonetheless, the gains and organizations of the open peasant movement are always on the brink of danger from the ruling state's employment of reactionary violence to preserve landlord power.


Thus, the peasantry's solid strength must be forged by building underground chapters of the Pambansang Katipunan ng mga Magbubukid (PKM). The PKM is at the core of the revolutionary mass movement in the countryside and leads the advance of agrarian revolution which slowly erodes the power of the landlord class and transfers revolutionary people's power to the peasantry. It is closely linked to the advance of armed struggle and revolutionary base building. On this truly lies the liberation of the peasantry. **AB**

Seizure of 2,000 has. in Quezon looms

An agro-industrial and eco-tourism project is threatening the livelihoods of coconut farmers in Mauban, Quezon. Achievement Realty Corp. (ARC) plans to subject a 1,987-hectare landholding in the villages of Rosario, Santo Niño and San Jose in Mauban to land-use conversion in order to build projects called Funtastic Dream World and FunMily Dream City.

A petition by the ARC (the registered landowner) to nullify the Certificates of Land Ownership Award (CLOA) and Notice of Coverage (NOC) earlier issued by the Department of Agrarian Reform is currently pending in court. In connivance with the ARC, the Mauban Municipal Council had earlier approved a resolution declaring as non-agricultural 650 hectares of coconut land within the disputed landholding in order to avoid coverage by the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program.

The area has thousands of coconut trees planted by farmers since the 1960s. The farmers have long been demanding that the area be subjected to land reform. In the face of ARC's plans to build its projects, the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas has called on the coconut farmers in the area to be vigilant and resist schemes to seize their land. **AB**

 <p>Vol XLV No. 12 June 21, 2014</p> <p><i>Ang Bayan</i> is published in Pilipino, Bisaya, Iloko, Hiligaynon, Waray and English editions.</p> <p>It is available for <i>downloading</i> at the Philippine Revolution Web Central located at:</p> <p>www.philippinerevolution.org.</p> <p><i>Ang Bayan</i> welcomes contributions in the form of articles and news. Readers are likewise enjoined to send in their comments and suggestions for the betterment of our publication. You can reach us by email at:</p> <p>angbayan@yahoo.com</p>	<p>Contents</p> <p>Editorial: Scrap CARP and build the revolutionary strength of the peasantry 1</p> <p>Seizure of 2,000 has. in Quezon looms 2</p> <p>Food prices soar 3</p> <p>Protests against pork barrel target Aquino 3</p> <p>Jeepney and FX drivers hold protests 4</p> <p>Gays and lesbians in the movement 5</p> <p>Two interviews 6</p> <p>NPA seizes firearms in Agusan del Norte 7</p> <p>Armed actions in Rizal and Sorsogon 7</p> <p>2 civilians killed in Davao del Norte 7</p> <p>Andrea Rosal taken to prison 7</p> <p>NXP protests continue 8</p> <p>EARIST protests succeed 8</p> <p>Aquino regime unconcerned with work safety 8</p>
<p><i>Ang Bayan</i> is published fortnightly by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines</p>	

Food prices soar

The Aquino regime's inutility in the face of soaring prices of rice and other agricultural products has earned it brickbats from various sectors. Already expensive, the price of rice rose further by ₱2-₱3 per kilo in the last few days. The prices of garlic, ginger, sugar, milk, meat and other foodstuff have also soared even as the wages of ordinary workers remained the same.

The regime issued the ridiculous statement that the price increases are only temporary and resorted to gimmicks like rolling stores selling foodstuff at slightly lower prices.

The steady rise in rice prices is among the deleterious effects of the liberalization and deregulation of agriculture. These policies are at the root of the people's lack of food security.

Contrary to a promise by Aquino that the Philippines will achieve rice self-sufficiency by 2013, he has perpetuated the policy of massive rice importation as the solution to insuffi-

cient supplies. The country will be importing up to two million tons of rice in 2013-2014, up from 1.5 million—or an increase of 33%.

Massive rice importations are among the biggest sources of bureaucrat capitalist profit. Media reports recently bared the anomaly-ridden contract signed by Agriculture Sec. Proceso Alcala with VINAFOOD II of Vietnam for the importation of 800,000 tons of rice from May to August 2014. The contract calls for overpriced freight charges (\$54 instead of the usual \$24 per ton), yielding up to ₱1.048 billions in

kickback. Alcala used the same tactic to pocket ₱457 million in another shady deal involving Vietnamese rice imports in May 2013.

Despite Alcala's obvious embezzlement in several anomalies, Aquino is hard put letting go of him due to the major role his agriculture secretary and fellow plunderer plays in raising funds for the ruling clique.

Also linked to trade liberalization in agriculture is widespread smuggling by the rice cartel. The cartel has long been in control of rice supplies and trading. In cahoots with the Aquino regime, it has been able to manipulate rice supplies in the local market in order to set steadily rising prices and rake in more profits. On the other hand, such supply manipulation provides the Aquino regime with the rationale to continue the corruption-ridden system of rice importation. AB

Aquino targeted by anti-pork barrel protests

Some 10,000 people rallied on June 12 in Metro Manila to assail the Aquino regime in the face of incessant and widespread corruption and Aquino's own involvement in the pork barrel scandal.

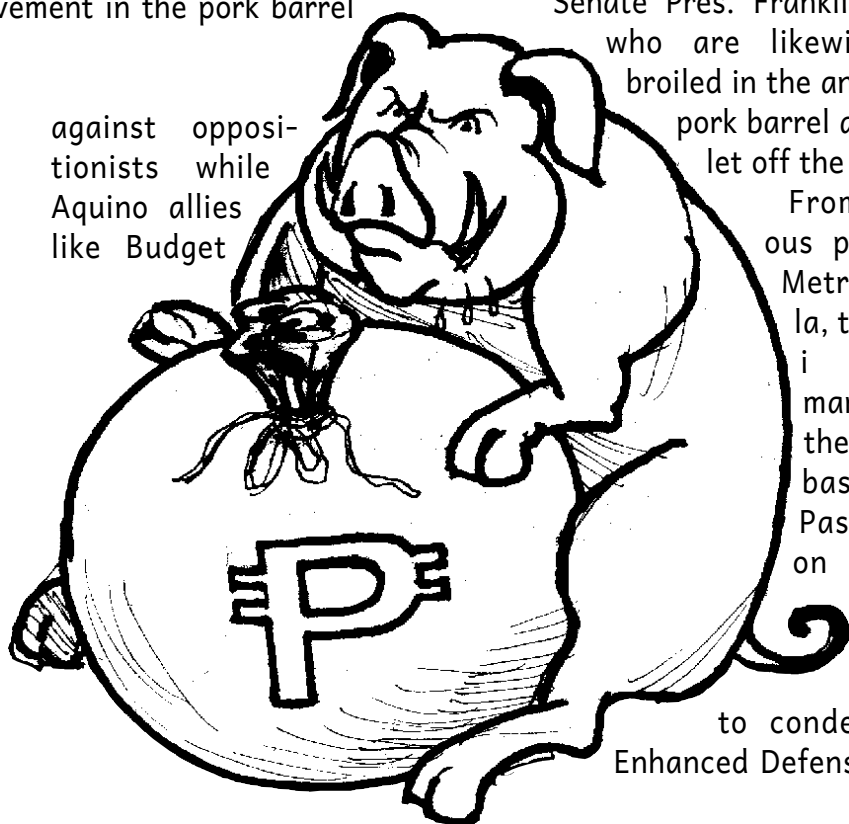
Among those who joined the rally were the Scrap Pork Network, Kontra-Korapsyon and #Abolishpork Movement coalitions, national-democratic mass organizations and alliances and various other groups and personalities. They were one in flailing Aquino for covering up for and defending his officials and allies involved in the pork barrel anomalies.

Through their slogan "*Lahat ng sangkot, dapat managot*" (Everyone involved must be held accountable), they scored the selective filing of cases

against oppositionists while Aquino allies like Budget

Sec. Florencio Abad, Agriculture Sec. Proceso Alcala and Senate Pres. Franklin Drilon who are likewise embroiled in the anomalous pork barrel are being let off the hook.

From various points of Metro Manila, the rallyists marched to the US Embassy in Pasay City on the morning of June 12 to condemn the Enhanced Defense Coop-



eration Agreement (EDCA). In the afternoon, they marched again towards Liwasang Bonifacio, unmindful of the rains that poured now and then. They later held a torch parade towards Mendiola Bridge, near the presidential palace.

The rallyists brought with them a "Golden Pig" effigy, first seen in the anti-corruption rallies in Makati in 2013. The pig wore a crown, symbolizing Aquino's status as the "pork barrel king."

Meanwhile, in Naga City, where Aquino delivered a speech, a number of Anakbayan members managed to penetrate the tight security cordon of the Presidential Security Group and the Naga City Police Office and shouted "*Patalsikin ang Pork Barrel King,*" "*Walang pagbabago sa ilalim ni Aquino!*" (Oust the Pork Barrel King, There has been no change under Aquino) They quickly disappeared and blended in the mass of people, but policemen arrested Em Mijares, a student of Ateneo de Naga. Mijares was detained for a few days before posting bail.

In Roxas City, more than a thousand rallyists led by BAYAN-Capiz marched through the main thoroughfares to assail the Aquino government's corruption in implementing the recovery and rehabilitation program after super typhoon Yolanda. In Iloilo City and Kalibo, Aklan, some 300 BAYAN members held a picket-rally.

In Cebu City, a delegation comprising 150 members of various progressive groups joined a 3,000-strong anti-corruption rally organized by the Catholic Church. In Baguio City, people expressed their anger through a protest concert. Progressive groups in Pampanga conducted a forum on the pork barrel. In Davao City, progressives protested at Rizal Park and called for an end to government corruption.

The protest actions were held to prepare, and build up heat, for a nationally coordinated anti-corruption mobilization coinciding with Aquino's State of the Nation Address (SONA) in July. **AB**

Jeepney and FX drivers launch transport strike

The majority of jeepney and FX (mini van) drivers and operators jointly launched a transport caravan and strike on June 19 in Metro Manila and other areas to oppose an order from the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) imposing exorbitant fines on public transport vehicles caught without franchises (the so-called "colorum") or engaged in various "illegal" activities.

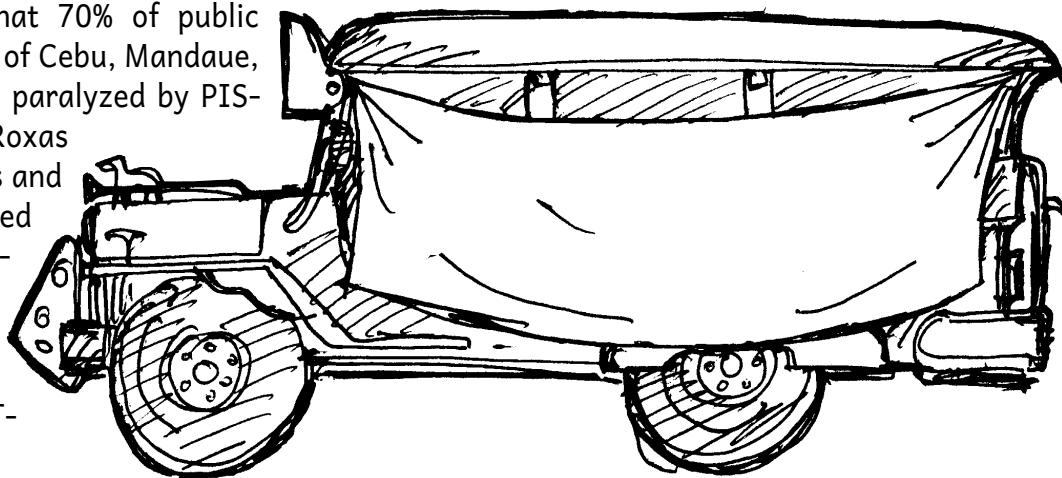
Initial reports indicate that transport routes were paralyzed or traffic greatly reduced along Commonwealth Avenue in Quezon City, Caloocan, Pasig, Marikina, Cavite and parts of Bulacan due to the widespread strike.

Other reports state that 70% of public transportation in the cities of Cebu, Mandaue, Lapu-lapu and Talisay was paralyzed by PISTON-Cebu. Meanwhile, in Roxas City, 90% of jeepneys, vans and tricycles joined the strike led by PISTON-Capiz and Hugpong Transport. In the cities of Iloilo, Cagayan de Oro and Baguio, PISTON members picketed the LT-

FRB branches in their respective areas.

The drivers and operators are up in arms against Joint Administrative Order (JAO) No. 2014-01, which they consider repressive. They added that the order will merely be a way for policemen and traffic enforcers to extort even more money, and will not resolve the traffic problem.

Bayan Muna representatives in Congress have called for an investigation of the new order, which imposes fines of ₱1 million on bus operators; ₱200,000 on truck and van operators; ₱120,000 on sedan operators; ₱50,000 on jeepney operators; and ₱6,000 on motorcycle operators. **AB**



Gays and lesbians in the revolutionary movement

"The Party recognizes and respects the right of individual Party members to choose their gender. The basic principles and rules on marriage within the Party are applicable in their case."

-On same-sex relationships, excerpted from Rules and Guidelines on Marriage within the Party, March 1998

On June 28, the 45th anniversary of the Stonewall uprising in New York City, USA will be commemorated in various parts of the globe, bringing together hundreds of gays, lesbians and anti-discrimination advocates. The incident, more commonly known as the "Stonewall riots" stemmed from a series of raids by New York City police on Stonewall Inn, a bar then frequented by gays and lesbians. The "Stonewall riots" pushed the emergence of groups advocating the rights of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders against discrimination in the economic, political and social arenas. The event is commemorated annually through "gay pride parades."

In the Philippines, progressive groups have long been waging struggles against discrimination targeting gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders. This struggle is not only fully supported by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) but is likewise being actively waged within its ranks.

The provision cited above is proof of the CPP's recognition of their rights and welfare. It has been included as an amendment to the "Rules and Guidelines on Marriage within the Party" in accordance with a decision by the Central Committee's 10th Plenum in 1992.

The Executive Committee of the Central Committee explained that the Party has long been opposed to any form of social discrimination, oppression and exploitation, including discrimination against women and discrimination based on gender preference. The Party is opposed to oppressing and depriving anyone of rights or opportunities solely because of his or her gender preference.

The Party does not close its doors on gays, lesbians, bisexuals

or transgenders who wish to join it. Whatever his or her gender preference, anyone who is ready to embrace and advance Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and the constitution of the Communist Party of the Philippines can become a member. The New People's Army has a similar rule recognizing the right of Red fighters to choose their gender.

Alongside the Party's recognition of the right to choose one's gender is its all-out efforts to resist prevailing erroneous views or behavior against individuals who have different gender preferences. Discrimination against gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders—ranging from humorous commentaries that reek of contempt to outright homophobia—is widespread in decadent societies. The revolutionary movement addresses this through education conducted among both the revolutionary forces and the masses. The movement exposes and assails the oppression suffered by gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders. Its goal is to struggle against various sectarian views and attitudes, prejudicial treat-

ment and distorted views on the character of individuals with different gender preferences.

The Party is aware that the acceptance, recognition and defense of the rights of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders are reflective of the level of political consciousness of the revolutionary forces and the people. Thus, if the Party does not firmly adhere to the basic principle of recognizing the right to gender preference, subjective sectarian views and behavior will keep on rearing their ugly heads.

Because the Party has clear policies against discrimination, all its cadres and members must be ready to treat every individual equally, regardless of gender preference. The revolutionary movement is thus able to pave the way for everyone to give their all to the revolutionary struggle for social change.

On the other hand, revolutionary gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders are challenged to contribute studies to enrich the Party's rules and policies. Among their responsibilities is to sum-up their experiences in order to further develop the Party's views on revolutionary homosexual marriages.

Gays and lesbians are individuals who are attracted to the same sex (men attracted to men, and women attracted to women). Bisexuals are individuals, male or female, who are attracted to both women and men. Transgenders are individuals, male or female, who choose, or express the desire, to live outside of the usual norms for their biological sex (as women, if male and as men, if female). Unlike gays, lesbians and bisexuals, the main basis for being transgender is gender identity rather than sexual orientation. These four different genders are collectively known as the "lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender" (LGBT) community.

Gays and lesbians: Two interviews

Due to the Party's policy against gender discrimination, comrades with different gender preferences have been thoroughly contributing their strengths, talents and abilities for the revolution's advance and have become exemplary revolutionaries in various fields.

Among them are Ka Leslie and Ka Kurt, both gay, and members of the Regional Medical Staff in Southern Mindanao Region. They are among the Red fighters in the thick of an intense guerrilla struggle against an all-out fascist attack by the US-Aquino regime on the revolutionary movement in Mindanao.

Ka Leslie, who hails from the youth sector, is a cadre who has taken the advanced medical course. Ka Kurt is a semiproletarian and is considered a "practitioner." He is part of a team of revolutionary medics conducting people's clinics in the region.

Like many other gays, Ka Kurt found it difficult to come out because he was afraid of how his family would react. But with the help of comrades in the community he worked in, he mustered the strength to open up about his sexual orientation.

Ka Leslie, on the other hand, was not able to come out about his gender while he was with the youth sector for fear that he would lose credibility and suffer discrimination. But when he joined the NPA, he decided to admit he was gay in order to rise above his subjective anxieties and rid himself of uncertainty. He was overjoyed when his coming out about his sexual orientation was welcomed not only by his fellow Red fighters but by his former sector.

Ka Leslie and Ka Kurt admit that they still experience discrimination from time to time. Nonetheless, they

concern minor things, and are immediately rectified through assessments and criticism and self-criticism. To them, what is important is that there are no limits imposed on their ability and opportunity to serve as revolutionaries.

Ka Kurt and Ka Leslie both take their work in the NPA seriously. The fact that they have been given responsibilities commensurate to their abilities regardless of their gender is to them, a mark of their comrades' respect and confidence in them. They both consider their coming out and their comrades' acceptance of them as gays as individually liberating. They have broken free of bourgeois society's prejudicial views and discrimination and enjoy the democracy and equality that the revolutionary movement has to offer. They believe that the Party raised the status of gays in society after its official recognition and assurance that their rights and welfare will be protected.

Although neither of them is currently in a relationship, they are content with the Party's recognition of their right to build relationships with, or marry anyone, as long as the object of their affection consents and none of

the Party's rules is violated. It is enough for them to know that the Party will protect and defend homosexual marriages the

same way it protects and defends heterosexual relationships.

The Party supports the institution of marriage for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender comrades. One such couple are Ka Zima and Ka Delphie, both lesbians working in the open mass movement in Metro Manila.

Ka Zima and Ka Delphie's love for each other bloomed within the revolutionary movement. Since the beginning, said Ka Zima, it was clear to both of them that the revolution formed the foundation of their love. To her, Ka Delphie is first and foremost, a comrade, and secondarily, her special "*karelasyon*" or sweetheart. In essence, the way they relate to each other is no different from the class-based sex love between heterosexual men and women comrades.

Since Ka Zima was organized by the progressive movement at an earlier time, she grappled with various views and levels of acceptance concerning her gender. She recalls that it was the movement that made her aware that coming out as a lesbian was part of her struggle against all forms of discrimination and oppression. She learned that there should be no conflict between one's mastery of various issues on society and revolution and one's grasp of the issues and struggles of lesbians and gays that are likewise products of prevailing reactionary society.

On the other hand, for Ka Delphie, the fact that she was attracted to women was never a big issue. It was easy for her to come out to her family and friends. She sees this as the result of the level of political consciousness she has achieved and her confidence in the Party's non-discriminatory view about same-sex relationships.



NPA seizes 5 firearms in Agusan del Norte

Red fighters under the Western Agusan Norte-Agusan Sur Sub-regional Command raided the house of Ramon Calo, the rabidly counter-revolutionary mayor of Carmen, Agusan del Norte, seizing five firearms.

The raid conducted on the night of June 8 yielded a baby M16, an Ingram machine pistol, a 9 mm pistol and two shotguns aside from magazines and rounds of ammunition. The Red guerrillas also confiscated a laptop and two cameras. After the raid, the NPA was able to make a quick and safe retreat.

The locals have long been complaining about Mayor Calo's militarist rule. Aside from his minions in the military and police, he maintains his own private army. AB

Red fighters mount military actions in Rizal and Sorsogon

Four enemy elements were killed and one wounded in military actions launched by the New People's Army (NPA) in Rizal and Sorsogon this June.

In Rizal, two soldiers were killed after a section of Red fighters under the NPA Narciso Antazo Aramil Command (NAAC) seized the initiative from a platoon of soldiers from the 21st Division Reconnaissance Company in Barangay Calawis, Antipolo City at around 10:30 a.m. of June 5.

Seven hours later, a soldier from the 16th IB was wounded when a military platoon attempted to ambush an NAAC squad hiking in Sitio Binayuyo, San Jose in the same city. The Red fighters outfought and outmaneuvered the enemy and safely retreated.

Meanwhile, in Sorsogon, Sgt. Rene Madrona and PO2 Christopher Escreza were killed in back to back special partisan operations mounted by the NPA Celso Minguez Command.

Madrona, who was meted punishment in Barangay Pactol, Bulusan municipality at around 8 p.m. of June 10 was an intelligence operative of the Philippine Army handling the town's network of informers.

Escreza, who was punished at the Barcelona town center at around 4 p.m. of June 11 was an intelligence officer of the Philippine National Police actively engaged in building a municipal-wide counterrevolutionary spy network. The NPA seized Escreza's 9 mm pistol. AB

60th IB kills 2 civilians in Davao del Norte

The 60th IB has been targeting defenseless civilians in Davao del Norte to take revenge for its defeats in the hands of the New People's Army (NPA) in the battlefield and the political arena.

A *habal-habal* (motorcycle for hire) driver and a local mass leader are the latest victims of extrajudicial killing by the 60th IB in the province this June.

Elements of the 60th IB killed Wilfredo Estrebillo in Sitio Pandulian, Barangay Mabantao, Kapalong on June 4. Estrebillo was one of six *habal-habal* drivers accused by the 60th IB of transporting food and equipment to the NPA. The five others are Eleazar Batobato, Loloy Labaho, Undo Labaho, Dodong Labaho and Peter Joy Eway. They are frequently blocked and harassed at military checkpoints.

Estrebillo was one of the civilians who witnessed the arrest of Cpl. Rogelio Rosales by Red fighters in Barangay Florida, Kapalong in May for his involvement in illegal logging. The military wrongly suspected Estrebillo of having had a hand in Rosales' capture and took revenge.

Elements of the 60th IB likewise killed farmer Flaviano Morales on June 13 in Barangay Napungas, Asuncion. Morales was a mass leader in their village and also served as municipal electoral staff for Bayan Muna. Weeks before he was killed, he was twice interrogated by the 60th IB. AB

Andrea Rosal forcibly taken back to prison

ELEMENTS of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BMJP) forcibly returned political detainee Andrea Rosal to prison on June 4.

Rosal was then at the Philippine General Hospital (PGH) paying her bills and attending to some papers when BJMP and AFP elements took her by force to Camp Bagong Diwa in Taguig City. She was dragged from her wheelchair and was not even allowed to go to the bathroom. The cellphones of her two companions, both GABRIELA members, were also confiscated to prevent them from contacting Rosal's lawyer.

Rosal, who was seven months pregnant when she was arrested in March, delivered a baby girl at the PGH in May. Due to the severe hardships she suffered in detention and the lack of medical attention, her baby died on May 17, two days after being born. AB

NXP workers' struggle vs. union busting continues

HUNDREDS of workers of NXP Semiconductors marched several kilometers and forced their way into the locked gates of the Light Industry and Science Park in Cabuyao, Laguna to rally in front of the NXP plant on June 7. They opposed the dismissal of 24 of their union leaders.

As they marched, the workers chanted "*Mang-gagawang tinanggal, ibalik! Ibalik!*" (Reinstate the dismissed workers) They were joined by workers from other unions, federation representatives and their supporters in demanding the return of the terminated officers and the resumption of negotiations for a collective bargaining agreement

(CBA).

The NXP workers' struggle has reaped support from organizations in Australia, The Netherlands, China, Hongkong and the US.

NXP Semiconductors, formerly Philips Semiconductors, supplies electronic parts to companies like Apple and Asus. (*For more details, read the May 21, 2014 issue of Ang Bayan*)

The union members are demanding an 8% wage hike. They say that the company can well afford it because it rakes in huge profits. NXP Semiconductors general manager Jose Miguel Orleans, however, is only willing to grant a 3.5% increase.

EARIST students' struggle succeeds

THE planned five-day hunger strike by 35 students of Eulogio "Amang" Rodriguez Institute of Science and Technology (EARIST) starting on the morning of June 9 lasted less than a day. Before the day ended, the school administration reversed its order expelling the students for not supporting EARIST policies.

The reversal came after a dialogue while the students, accompanied by their parents, staged their hunger strike in front of the EARIST compound in Nagtahan, Sta. Mesa, Manila. The students were likewise allowed to enroll.

The 35 EARIST students were barred from enrolling allegedly for their involvement in a protest action against certain fees being collected by the school. Close to 5,000 students walked out of their classes last November to oppose illegal fees being charged the students. One of them is a ₱1,000 "development fee" that was charged each semester from 2012 to 2013. The fees were strongly opposed by the Katipunan ng mga Mag-aaral at Organisasyon (KAMA), a campus political party. The 35 EARIST students were either leaders or members of KAMA.

Barring the students from enrolling at EARIST was a violation of their right to free expression and assembly. Thus, when school opened, the victims decided to confront the issue with a protest action instead of allowing the administration to suppress their rights. **AB**

Aquino regime unconcerned with work safety

UP to 60% of factories in the Philippines disregard health and safety standards. The survey was bared by the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) in the face of successive accidents at the workplace resulting in deaths or injuries to workers.

Capitalists do not normally provide protective or safety gear to their workers, especially those assigned in hazardous areas. Violations of Rule 1080 and other provisions of the Philippine Occupational Health and Safety Standards are rampant.

On May 30, a worker was killed and six others were wounded at Superstar Coconut Products Co., Inc. in Maa, Davao City when one of the company's steam boilers exploded.

The Superstar workers disclosed that the company charged them for their safety gear like helmets and boots. They also complained that the factory clinic was useless because it could not even provide first aid when the accident occurred.

The Superstar workers had long been demanding that the company take steps to ensure their safety at the workplace and that they be allowed to form a union that would protect their interests. These demands were contained in a 2011 agreement between the Kahugpungan sa Trabahante sa Superstar and the company's management.

The accident at Superstar is just one of the many that happen at the workplace almost on a daily basis. As recently as May 29, seven women workers of Asia Metro Tech were killed in a fire that gutted the company warehouse in Pasay City. Investigations revealed that the workers were required to sleep at the warehouse whose doors were locked at night, thus preventing them from fleeing the flames.

A similar incident happened on May 9, 2012 at Novo Jeans and Shirts (NVJS) retail shop in Butuan City, where up to 17 workers perished when the building burned down.

Capitalists also rarely assume the hospital bills or other medical needs of workers who meet accidents at the workplace. Silvestre Culiao, a forklift driver at Mintrade, a plywood company in Davao City, was blinded when he was hit by debris while

loading lumber in February. His hospital expenses amounting to more than ₱30,000 were deducted from his ₱50,000 separation pay. Culiao had been working for the company for 12 years at the time of the accident. **AB**