



EDITORIAL

Build broadest unity to end the tyranny

The Duterte regime has reached a new level of international notoriety. Last week's resolution of the European Parliament denounced the thousands of extrajudicial killings and other serious human rights violations both in the so-called drug war and against human rights activists, environmental activists, trade unionists and journalists. With his unmitigated and brutal reign of state terror, plunder and national treachery, Duterte is now among the ranks of history's most detested dictators.

The brazenness of the regime's fascist attacks against the people have prompted the international community to raise their voices. The European Parliament has taken a step further by calling on the European Commission to suspend the country's trade preferences with EU. The European Parliament vote underscores the isolation of the Duterte regime not only from the Filipino people, but from the international community as well.

The Filipino people welcomes fervently the European Parliament resolution, as well as the statements of members of the Australian

and Basque parliament as well as personalities from various countries. It is a big boost to their resistance against the Duterte regime's reign of state terrorism. The resolution comes at a most opportune time as the Filipino people seek an urgent end to the regime's failed response to the pandemic, its insatiable corruption, rapid accumulation of debt, and heightening state terrorism and repression.

The regime stubbornly insists on its militarist approach to the pandemic with token health measures and insufficient economic subsidies. There remains no free mass

testing and contact tracing remains slow and unable to keep at step with new infections. Thus, the virus continues to run ahead while the government continues to lose the game of catch-up. In the past month, there are several thousand daily new infections pushing the number of Covid-19 cases to close to 300,000. Millions of Filipinos, especially the downtrodden cramped in congested communities, remain under threat of getting infected. The unmanaged pandemic is pushing the limits of health care facilities, especially in the provinces.

The number of infections have risen sharply among workers and ordinary employees who need to travel and work in factories and offices without sufficient protection. Duterte ordered the easing of restrictions on business operations but did not require capitalists to

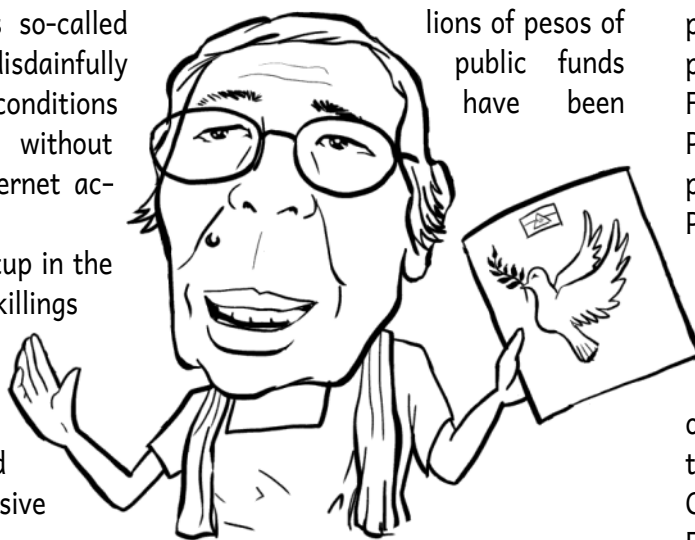
conduct testing and follow public health standards. Using the pandemic to force his anti-poor jeepney phaseout program, Duterte stubbornly refuses to allow Covid-19-safe jeeps back on the road despite the lack of public transportation.

The regime has practically abandoned millions of Filipino students and their teachers by failing to make sufficient preparations and upgrade schools and necessary facilities to allow teachers to safely teach before their students this year and next. It has refused to listen to criticism of its so-called “blended learning” that disdainfully disregards the concrete conditions of millions of families without funds for gadgets or internet access.

There has been no letup in the regime’s campaign of killings and abuses of human rights even amid the pandemic. Duterte’s dirty war has intensified marked by the successive

killings, abductions, torture, arrest and prolonged detention against activists and critics of the regime. Gross violations of human rights are being committed everyday in the course of counterinsurgency and the tactics of psywar, military occupation and hamletting of rural communities.

Duterte and his cronies have taken advantage of the pandemic to intensify bureaucrat capitalist accumulation through overpriced government purchases, kickbacks and bribes. Billions of pesos of public funds have been






realigned to the pockets of big bureaucrats in buying overpriced medical equipment and corruption in PhilHealth. Even without any clear prospects, Duterte is already scheming to buy vaccines from Russia and China in what may turn out to be one of the biggest scams in the regime’s Covid-19 response.

If the regime’s 2021 draft budget is to serve as any indicator, there clearly is no end to the people’s sufferings under the Duterte regime. The regime’s 2021 budget is utterly anti-people and prioritizes counterinsurgency and pork barrel over health. While Filipinos will get a measly P3.16/day for their health expenses, Duterte will get to spend P12.3 million per day of so-called confidential funds. No extra funds were allotted to education despite the urgent need for upgrading public schools. On the other hand, allocation for the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) was increased by 2,969% to P19.1 billion.

The regime and its mouthpieces are endlessly dishing out lies and half-truths to cover up the real situation of the country. Without any basis, it claims the worst of the Covid-19 pandemic is over, even as the Filipino people are experiencing unprecedented levels of joblessness and socioeconomic desperation. On the other hand, Duterte extended the “state of calamity” by one year to enable him and his minions to continue the plunder of public funds and pursue their various schemes to perpetuate themselves in power.

There is great urgency for the Filipino people to bring together the greatest possible number of democratic organizations, movements, institutions, agencies, sectors and classes in a broad united front for ousting the Duterte regime. Only by doing so can Filipino have better chance at fighting the pandemic,

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overcoming the economic crisis, ending state terrorism and paving the way to attain a just and lasting peace.

All sorts of sectoral, multi-sectoral, campus-based and territorial alliances, formal or non-formal, can be built to serve as centers for cooperation and coordination of all anti-Duterte forces. They can mount different types of activities to provide venues for political and cultural expression by people with different levels of consciousness. Overseas Filipinos must also mobilize to draw global support and help generate international diplomatic, political and economic pressure against the regime.

The national democratic forces must be the solid core of the broad united front of anti-Duterte forces. They must be flexible, creative and patient in bringing together people and raising their consciousness and militance. At the same time, they must be unwavering even in the face of the regime's intimidation and threats.

The demand for Duterte's resignation or ouster is the most urgent clamor of the Filipino people who desire to attain justice, restore their rights and freedoms, and to have a government that responds to their welfare and prioritizes efforts to attain peace instead of waging endless wars against the people. **AB**

Duterte's pandemic response is below failing mark

Ka Juliet de Lima, interim chairperson of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), rated the Duterte regime's response to the Covid-19 pandemic a "negative 99.9%." "He (Rodrigo Duterte) has absolutely done nothing right" and instead scourged the people and made the government bankrupt.

"The regime's response to the Covid 19 pandemic has been militarist and not medical," said Ka Julie. It has not taken into consideration the rights and welfare of the people in implementing its lockdown and quarantine measures. Actually, this has even resulted in the rapid spread of the pandemic and repress the people, especially poor, she added.

Duterte plundered public coffers under the guise of distributing aid and conducting mass testing. "No benefits have been delivered to the mass of Covid-19 sufferers nor to the millions of people deprived of livelihood as a result of the lockdown."

"And worst, responders belonging to the legal mass organizations such as Zara Alvarez are either arrested, tortured and treacherously killed by the military and police supposedly deployed to enforce the quarantine and lockdown."

Medical and health workers should be put in charge of the fight against the pandemic, pointed out Ka Julie. Priority funding must be made to the medical fight against the pandemic. This means emergency funding must be made available to aid the people affected by the socioeconomic effect of the pandemic.

"The military and its facilities should not be deployed in enforcing the quarantine and lockdown but in using its own medical personnel and units in boosting up health and medical efforts in the fight against the pandemic." She said that they should only be utilized in providing services

such assisting those affected by the lockdown in to go back to their home provinces. Local police forces should be deployed in giving emergency aid to those in need of help.

"Duterte and his cronies must be stopped from plundering public funds and the emergency aid and loans given or made available by foreign countries and international agencies to the Filipino people."

Ka Julie criticized the regime for pouring billions of taxpayer funds into its prime counterinsurgency drive, awarding NTF-ELCAC with an astounding 2,969% budget increase. "This huge wastage of public funds on the military is a major cause of the bankruptcy of the government," she stressed. "Its effect is to add fuel to the people's war rather than to stop it."

If only Duterte has not cancelled the peace negotiations and respected agreements reached by both panels such as the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER), this could have significantly helped his regime in facing the pandemic.

"CASER has relevant provisions on confronting the issue of the Covid-19 pandemic," pointed out Ka Julie. It has a whole article devoted to the discussion of the people's right to health, which includes the establishment of a universal public health system that provides free, comprehensive and quality health services for all. Before Ka Julie was appointed as interim chairperson of the panel, she served as the head of the reciprocal working committee

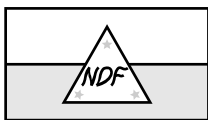
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which drafted the said agreement.

Sections 4, 5 and 6 of Article XIV (Right to Health) of CASER stipulates that integrated health systems shall give focus on sustainable preventive medicine with community-based comprehensive primary health care that provides quality health services and addresses nutrition, access to water, housing, education, employment and livelihoods, and other factors affecting health.

Section 5 ensures that health workers, medical and non-medical personnel receive living wages and salaries, get adequate benefits, work decent hours in humane work conditions, and security of tenure and employment. Section 6 stipulates the responsibility of the state to harness, develop and promote traditional, alternative and indigenous healing practices of communities and shall protect these from undue attack by intellectual property rights regimes and competition with imported medicines. AB



The following are among the provisions stipulated in **Article 21** of **CASER**

related to pandemic preparedness and response, as well as other disasters:



provide ample support for disaster preparedness and risk reduction.

NDFP expresses intent to engage with vice president

The National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) expressed intent to engage in discussions with Vice Pres. Leni Robredo as the constitutional successor of Rodrigo Duterte to press for the resumption of peace negotiations in case he gets ousted or forced to resign.

"This can serve as a rallying point in the effort to oust Duterte," said Juliet de Lima, interim chairperson of the NDFP panel.

"Prospects for resuming the peace negotiations after Duterte, whether he is ousted or he finishes his term, are possible and desirable," pointed out Ka Julie. "It would be wise for his presidential successor to fulfill the outstanding demand of the NDFP for reaffirming all the signed agreements reached under previous administrations, the amnesty and release of all political prisoners and through the peace negotiations aim for national reconciliation, peace and unity, which can lead to a coalition government to implement the agreements made on social, economic and political reforms and ending the conflict; and settling the disposition of both armed force made in the peace negotiations." AB

Should the negotiations between the NDFP and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines be resumed during the pandemic, the panels can immediately resume to tackle the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER) to finalize this and have it approved.

"When negotiations are resumed, we can elaborate on the issue based on a summing up of experience and learning lessons from both sides as well as from the positive and negative practices of foreign countries and international agencies in responding and confronting this particular pandemic as well as other pandemics," she said.

Both panels have earlier agreed to implement the said agreement once the section on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development at National Industrialization gets approved. AB



immediate response and relief, and comprehensive rehabilitation, reconstruction and recovery.



prohibit privatization of any aspect of disaster response as not to compromise the delivery of services to people.



draft a rehabilitation and reconstruction plan that is appropriate to specific community and hazard circumstances.



provide adequate financial, material, moral and psychosocial support.

Capitalist exploitation intensifies under pandemic

Exploitation of workers has intensified after returning to work amid the Covid-19 pandemic. When the Duterte regime allowed selected industries to reopen last May, it did so without requiring capitalists to test workers and ensure their health and safety in the workplace. Since then, it has only released two non-compulsory orders where companies were merely "encouraged" to respect basic workers rights and welfare. No sanctions were set for non-compliance.

Unsafe labor zones

Unsafe labor zones

In August, recorded infections rose sharply in Calabarzon's (Region IV-A) export processing zones, where workers are highly concentrated in assembly lines. In Laguna Technopark alone, 30 out of 140 companies reported Covid-19 outbreaks at the end of July. These include large factories owned by Gardenia, Ftech, Alaska, Coca-cola, IMASEN, Technol Eight, Optodev, Interphil, Edward Keller, Toshiba and Nexperia. Regional health officials attributed the spread to private companies' refusal to implement appropriate health measures. Officials said that common sources of infections included transport arrangements, dorms and dining areas but infections could also have spread from production lines. Contrary to government guidelines for social distancing, most factories are already operating at 80% to 100% capacity since restrictions were lifted according to workers' safety watchdogs.

Majority of Filipino workers are non-unionized and contractuels in these zones. Companies tend to disregard their health and welfare in the rush to earn greater profits.

There has been cases where a company refused to shut down operations to disinfect the premises even after two workers tested positive. When the infection spread, the company sent infected workers home without pay. Quarantine facilities are lacking. Oftentimes, workers had no choice but to go back to

their rented, crowded boarding houses and homes, exposing their families and other workers to infection. There was no contact tracing, no follow-up health checks from the company. The local government only sent the barangay midwife to monitor their temperature.

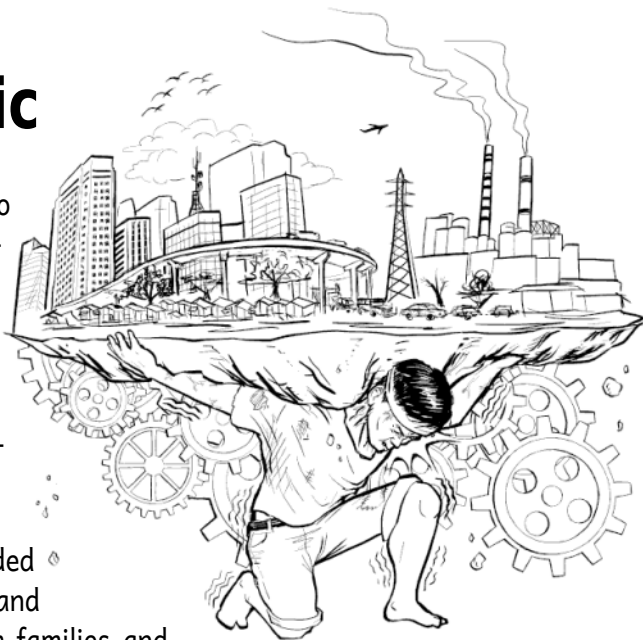
No mass testing has been conducted. Workers who experienced symptoms continued to mingle in highly dense assembly lines and common areas. Companies who tested their workers did not extend testing to their families.

In Metro Manila, there have been call center companies which willfully withheld data on infections to avoid being shutdown. Infected workers were only sent home and made to fend for themselves. Agents continue to work in compact air-conditioned offices even if they sense that they were already infected.

Worse, many companies have used the pandemic to terminate workers or shortchange contractuels. In June, around 300 workers from Jollibee food commissary Zenith Foods Corporation were arbitrarily fired and promptly replaced. In Southern Tagalog, arbitrary layoffs have also been reported in the factories and warehouses of Lazada, Nippon Paint, SKMTI, TS Tech, Logistics, Conception and Unimagina.

Inutile government

The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) reported last



September 9 that it has inspected only 40,943 establishments out of more than a million registered businesses. Almost a fourth (9,943) of these companies did not comply to requisite health measures such as wearing of face masks and shields, providing sanitation facilities, and regular temperature and health checks.

Again and again, the Duterte regime refused to heed the demand for government to undertake mass testing among workers and the people. It only urged private to test workers before employing them. Most workers had to pay for the tests themselves, which costs from ₱4,000 to ₱8,000 per test. Phil-Health only covers ₱900 per test.

The regime also refused to require private companies to provide adequate isolation facilities. Instead, it ordered local government units to convert classrooms into temporary isolation units and pass monitoring of the patients on to local barangays.

There have been no testing in workers communities. The regime also did not require private companies to give their workers a "quarantine pay" for the requisite 14 days. Instead of compelling these companies, the regime toothlessly "suggested" that workers be given paid and extended sick leave and supplemental allowance. The "no work, no pay" policy is

"Capitalist..." continued on page 6

The Marcos borrowing binge is being replicated by Duterte

Second part of the series on the Duterte regime's borrowing binge. Read the first part, "Pandemic borrowing binge," in Ang Bayan, August 21, 2020; second part, "Predicament to be caused by Duterte's borrowing spree," in Ang Bayan, September 7, 2020.

Much like Duterte today, the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos colluded with imperialist financial institutions to fund his grandiose infrastructure program purportedly to spur economic growth in the country.

Marcos borrowed heavily from the US-controlled International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) to fund 61 of these projects. These included the notorious Bataan Nuclear Power Plant and many other projects that turned out to be white elephants and provided Marcos and his cronies huge kickbacks.

Upon declaring martial law, Marcos liberalized borrowing and made policy adjustments in compliance with IMF-WB conditionalities. He immediately removed the ceiling on public borrowing dismantling the debt margin which was initially pegged at \$1 billion with an annual ceiling of just \$250 million. Within eight years (1973-1981), Marcos accumulated \$2.6 billion in loans from the WB alone. By 1980, the Philippines became the WB's 8th top recipient of loans among 113 poor countries. Simultaneously, loans from foreign private banks also ballooned from just \$2 billion in 1972 to \$24.5 billion in 1983. All in all, Philippine foreign debt skyrocketed from just \$600 million in 1965 to more than \$26 billion in 1986.

By 1980, the Philippines became the top recipient in Asia and 2nd in the world for structural adjustment loans (SALs). These loans came with conditionalities including tariff cuts, removal of import licenses and quantitative restrictions, additional taxes, privatization of public assets, deregulation, labor-export, wage cuts and many other anti-people and market-oriented reforms. These neoliberal measures will later be come to be known as the Washington Consensus.

The SALs incurred from 1980 to 1984 totaling to more than \$500 million were accompanied by policy conditions which mark the beginning

of decades of Philippine neoliberal restructuring. Among others, average tariff protection was significantly cut from 43% in 1981 to just 28% in 1985 resulting in bankruptcies among local enterprises leading to massive job losses.

Contrary to attempts at historical revisionism which conjure the illusion of "golden years" under the US-Marcos dictatorship, the economy actually collapsed during martial law. By 1985, the unemployment rate reached 12.6% from just 3.9% in 1975. Prices of basic goods and services also dramatically increased as the inflation rate soared to nearly 30% in 1985 from 6.8% in 1975.

Despite the nominal restoration of democracy after the dictator was ousted in 1986, all succeeding regimes, including the incumbent Duterte regime continue to uphold and implement IMF-WB-imposed neoliberal reforms. AB



"Capitalist...." from sa page 5

ruthlessly enforced even when they got sickly clearly from the factory. They are often not given hazard pay.

The regime banned public transportation, yet did not provide an alternative. It again shifted the

responsibility to private companies, which in turn, hired other private companies and let the workers pay for the expensive service. Workers in Laguna complained of shelling out as much as ₱60/day, from their meager ₱373 daily wage, for shuttle services.

Worse, the regime urged the slashing of wages through a department order that would allow companies to "negotiate" wage cuts. Many of those who have work from home arrangements have already accepted cuts up to 50% of their basic pay. AB

Solons question budget for fascism and corruption

Progressive representatives scrutinized and questioned the Duterte regime's proposed budget for 2021 this month. Representatives from the Makabayan Bloc highlighted the bloated allocations for the military, as well as for Rodrigo Duterte's office and agencies under it.

These include a nearly 3,000% budget increase for the National Task Force-ELCAC, ₱206-billion increase for the Department of National Defense and huge allocations for the Office of the President's intelligence funds. The representatives criticized these agencies for squandering public funds in carrying out the regime's suppression campaign, marked by red-tagging, illegal arrests and detentions, and extrajudicial killings, which is directed against organizations, individuals and institutions critical of regime.

In line with this, Sen. Franklin Drilon demanded an audit of funds allotted to the NTF-ELCAC. He said that the manner of disbursement to the agency "allows corruption to thrive." Around ₱16.7 billion out of the ₱19-billion allocation will go to barangays for unprogrammed social and economic projects.

Mass organizations also criticized the regime for prioritizing its infrastructure program amid the raging pandemic. According to Ibon Foundation, around ₱1.1 trillion out of the ₱4.3-trillion national budget is earmarked for the regime's Build, Build, Build program. Getting the lion's share are the Department of Public Works and Highways (₱613 billion) and Department of Transportation (₱107.4 billion). A large part (36%) of these funds are allocated for road construction. On the other hand, only ₱1.8 billion was allocated for the construction of medical facilities and hospitals despite the lagging health system in the country.

As in the previous years, solons

treat infrastructure funds as pork barrel. Huge funding gaps between districts was exposed when a pro-administration congressman questioned the large allocation for the districts of Duterte's most trusted minions in Congress. This includes the ₱8-billion allocation for Rep. Alan Cayetano's district and ₱11.8 billion for Rep. Luis Raymund Vilafuerte's district.

If taken in its entirety, budget allocation for social services remain small. According to Ibon Foundation, the regime allocated less for programs crucial in the time of the pandemic and recession. The nominal increase in the allocation for the Department of Labor and Employment is insufficient to aid millions of workers who lost their jobs. Funds for the Department of Trade and Industry's program for small businesses dropped from ₱534 billion to ₱454 billion.

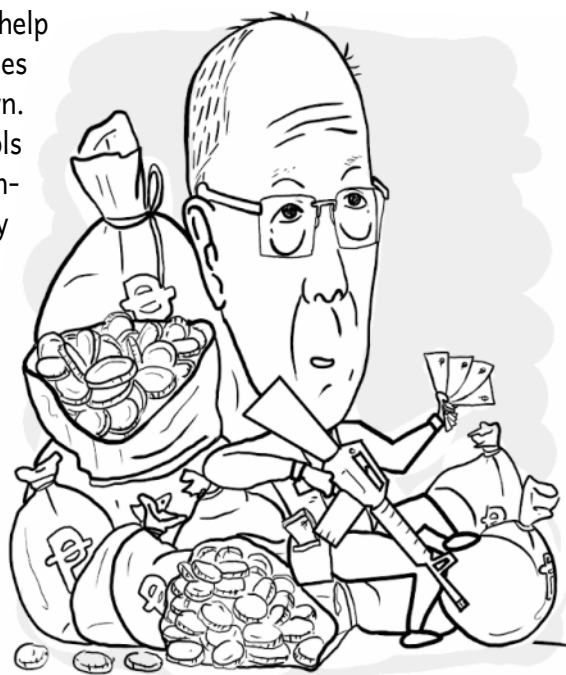
The regime hypes that it increased funding for education and social services. However, it failed to allocate sufficient funds to help students cope with changes brought about by the lockdown. As elementary and high schools are shifting to modular and online learning, the regime only allotted a minimal increase to the budget for curriculum development. It also allotted measly increases in the budget for state universities and colleges. It did not allocate funds to improve the backward digital which is a bane to online education.

Worst of all is its allocation for the Department of

Health, which should have been the priority as the current health system is already overstretched, and the pandemic is showing no sign of ending, is increased only by 2.9% (₱27 billion). This is way insufficient even just for hiring additional medical workers. Budget for crucial medical programs were slashed including the epidemiology and surveillance program, maintenance of public hospitals (including Covid-19 centers) and test laboratories, data gathering systems, training for medical personnel and many others. According to the Alliance of Health Workers, this reflects the regime's deliberate neglect of the people's health and its policies against mass testing, contact tracing and ensuring that pandemic measures are science-based.

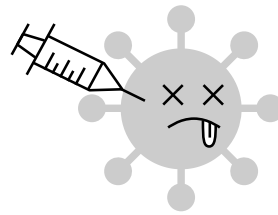
Aside from the increase in allocations for Duterte and his minions' counterinsurgency program and corruption, nothing has essentially changed in the proposed budget for 2021. It still breeds a favorable ground for corruption benefitting only plunderers and fascists even in the midst of a pandemic and recession.

AB



₱ 2.5 BILLION

funds for Covid-19 vaccines.

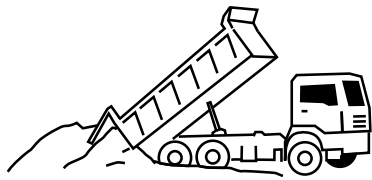


At the very minimum, **₱22 billion** is needed to **vaccinate all Filipinos.**

₱ 28 million

SQUANDERED BY DENR

IN **COVERING** A 500-METER STRETCH OF **MANILA BAY** WITH DOLOMITE "**WHITE SAND.**"



Dolomite contains aluminum, lead, and mercury which are dangerous to humans and marine species.

₱ 3.16

daily health budget per Filipino



in Duterte's 2021 budget proposal.

"You can't even buy a tablet of paracetamol with that," commented health workers.

Shield Act

for the allocation of a **₱1.568-trillion** emergency fund for **students, workers** and **small enterprises.**

filed by the **Makabayan bloc** (House Bill 7620)

626

lawmakers of the European Parliament

voted in favor of a **resolution** calling for an **independent investigation** into the **human rights situation** in the **Philippines.**

Only seven voted against it.

100,000+

protested in **Minsk, Belarus** on **September 13** against **tyranny.**

The same number of people **protested** in **Bangkok, Thailand** on **September 19** calling to **dismantle the monarchy** and end **military reign.**



September 9, 1976

Day the great leader **Mao Zedong** died.

His **44th death anniversary** was commemorated this year.

37 PETITIONS

filed at the **Supreme Court** against the **Anti-Terror Act**

Soldiers ravage villages like madmen

State agents mercilessly killed Rolando Patiño Leyson, Sr., 78, last September 12 in Barangay San Pedro, Sison, Surigao del Norte. Five armed men raided his house and shot him 20 times. Leyson was targeted just because his son is a known New People's Army (NPA) commander in the province.

Earlier on September 8, tricycle driver Jojie Udtohan Gayoso was also killed by the same group in the same village. Gayoso was Leyson's friend.

In Eastern Samar, elements of the 78th IB killed a mentally challenged man at Sitio Sitio Kabugawan, Barangay Aroganga, Dolores on August 16. The victim was killed after throwing a coconut at a soldier. The soldiers coincidentally came across with the victim near the site where they encountered an NPA unit.

In Negros Oriental, 62nd IB troopers arrested Nonna Espinosa and nine others at Sityo Ilihan, Barangay Buenavista, Guihulngan City on September 10. They are still being held incommunicado.

In Negros Occidental, three farmers were also harassed by 62nd IB troopers occupying Barangay Budlasan, Canlaon City on September 17. Ernie Jacolbe and Gilbert Reyes were tending their carabaos when they were harassed by soldiers. The soldiers also threatened Reyes' brother, Romeo. Houses at Sitio Natuling were also ransacked and personal belongings stolen by the soldiers. Another group of youngsters were also harassed by the soldier in an adjacent barangay.

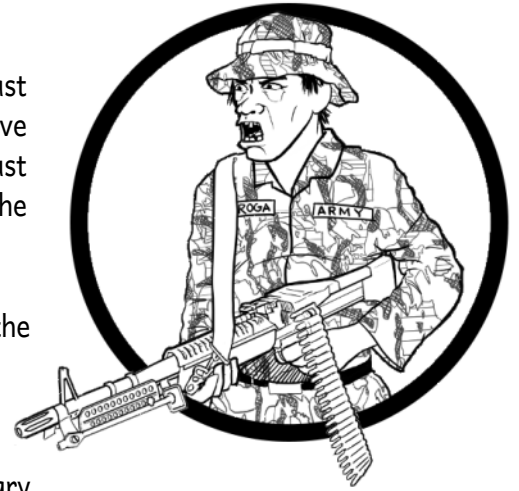
In Western Samar, more barangays are now being rampaged by the 87th IB and 14th IB under the guise of the Retooled Community Support Program. Military operations now cover barangays Hagbay and Cataydungan in San Jose de Buan, in addition to 33 other barangays the military has been occupying since May. Eight of these barangays were hamletted, wherein only three residents at a time are

being allowed to leave the barangay.

Driver leader arrested in Bicol

Joint elements of the military and police arrested Ramon Rescovilla on September 9 while he was on his way home to Daraga, Albay. A gun and grenade was planted in his bag as evidence. He was then brought to a precinct where he was beaten up. He was slapped with a trumped-up murder charge.

Rescovilla is the vice president of the Pinag-isang Samahan ng mga Tsuper at Operator Nationwide (Piston) and concurrently serves as the spokesperson of Condor-Piston Bicol.



In Camarines Norte, state forces arrested broadcaster Rommel Fenix and four other journalists last September 15. They were charged with libel by the governor and other local government officials.

A day earlier, journalist Jobert Bercasio was gunned down in Barangay Cabid-an, Sorsogon City on September 14. Bercasio is the 17th journalist killed under the Duterte regime.

AB

SPLIT, mega farm program will aggravate landlessness

THE SUPPORT TO Parcelization of Lands for Individual Titles (SPLIT) program of the Department of Agriculture (DA) will only aggravate landlessness in the countryside, said the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) in a statement last September 7. The program will be funded using an ₱18.3-billion loan from the World Bank. It is set to cover nearly 1.4 million hectares of agricultural land being tilled by approximately one million farmers.

SPLIT does not plainly aim to distribute land titles to farmers. Contrary to its name, the program actually aims to pave the way for the reconcentration of land into the hands of big companies to construct their mega farms. Decades of KMP's struggles prove that farmers granted certificates of land ownership award often lose their claim through loopholes in the law, violence and deception. Anomalous schemes of land reconcentration implemented by landlords such as the ariendo system are prevalent.

The Mega Farms and Food Security Program of DA is also set to aggravate hunger among peasant families. The said program aims to "cooperativize" farmers who own small parcels of land to engage in special production of high-value export crops in 50-hectare mega farms. This is related to the program being pushed by the Asian Development Bank which aims to make farmers transition to planting cash crops, especially rice farmers who went bankrupt due to rice import liberalization.

Protests for human rights, against budget cuts and dictatorship

Various sectoral groups launched successive street and online protests in the past few weeks.

Youth groups staged a picket in front of the Congress in Quezon City in conjunction with the budget hearing on education last September 16. This was followed by a mobilization by the urban poor who asserted their right to emergency aid in conjunction with the budget hearing for the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

A day earlier, teachers mounted a picket to demand higher budget for education.

On September 14, hundreds of drivers converged in front of the headquarters of the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board in Quezon City. They demanded that all jeepney drivers be al-

lowed to resume their operations, as well as the reopening of all routes and the junking of the jeepney phaseout scheme. The agency allowed 1,159 more jeepneys to travel but drivers asserted that this is insignificant. Around 58,000 jeepneys are still not allowed to travel leaving approximately 116,000 drivers without income.

On the same day, rights group Karapatan launched the Global Day of Action for the Philippines in conjunction with the opening of the session of the United Nations Human Rights Council. Five United Nations special rapporteurs, members of the European, Basque and Australian parliament, international coalitions

and institutions, and human rights defenders in Hongkong, Korea, Kenya, Turkey and South Africa participated in the program.

Martial law victims and their supporters protested at the Bantayog ng mga Bayani on September 11, in conjunction with the birthday of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos. They condemned the Marcos Day bill which aims to declare September 11 as a holiday in Ilocos to commemorate Marcos.

In Davao City, members of Gabriela, KMU and Karapatan marched across the Orcullo Drive last September 14 to protest against the continuing and widespread red-tagging and harassment campaign of the military and local government directed against local activists. AB

NPA punishes intelligence agents

THE NEW PEOPLE'S Army (NPA)-Roselyn Jean Pelle Command ambushed intelligence agent Benedicto Omblero last September 4 in Negros Occidental. Two .45 caliber pistols and ammunition were seized from him. Omblero was an element of the Military Intelligence Battalion under the command of the 3rd ID, and a member of the anti-communist group ANAD.

Meanwhile, the NPA-Surigao del Norte also punished intelligence agent PSSgt. Restie Dandan on August 18.

Omblero and Dandan were involved in the illegal arrests of peasants, various cases of harassment against residents, extortion and other anti-social activities in villages.

In Davao City, five soldiers of the 27th IB were killed in an NPA ambush at Sitio Lubas, Paquibato District on August 26.

Pemberton back in US after receiving pardon

THE FILIPINO PEOPLE were shocked and enraged with Rodrigo Duterte's decision granting Joseph Scott Pemberton, a US soldier found guilty of murdering transgender Jennifer Laude in 2015, absolute pardon last September 6. Pemberton has only served half of his 10-year sentence.

In a statement on September 7, the Communist Party of the Philippines said that Duterte displayed outright subservience to the US government and military, and called the act an injustice to the Laude family and treachery to the Filipino people.

Before pardoning Pemberton, at least 10 criminal cases involving US troops under the Visiting Forces Agreement were recorded in the Philippines. Excluding a rape case in 2005, all other cases have not reached the reactionary courts.

Dr. Edberto Villegas, 80

THE COMMUNIST PARTY of the Philippines and other progressive groups and individuals paid tribute to Dr. Edberto Villegas, one of the country's most fervent patriot, champion of anti-imperialism and revolutionary intellectual. He passed away at the age of 80 after suffering a stroke last September 7. He was among the founding members of the patriotic youth organization Kabataang Makabayan in 1964.

He was a professor of the University of the Philippines-Manila and De La Salle University. As a revolutionary intellectual, he fervently criticized the neoliberal policies and programs of World Bank-trained technocrats which perpetuated the country's backward economic state. He authored several books which exposed the different facets of imperialist oppression and exploitation.