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Editorial

Aquino's much-vaunted growth is bogus and hollow

Benigno Aquino III and his technocrats have been relentlessly boasting about the alleged 6.6% growth in the economy in 2012. They claim this to be the result of the "righteous path" and "good governance." Even the World Bank has chimed in, saying that the Philippines is now a "rising tiger."

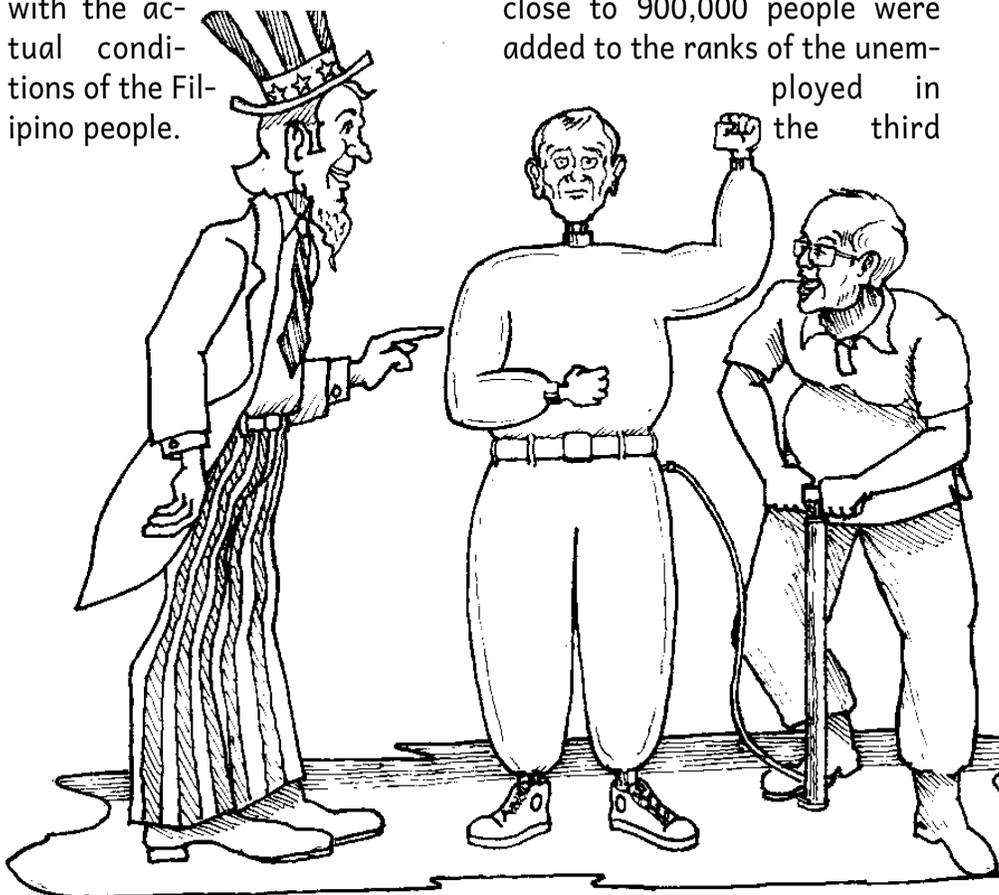
For the Filipino people, however, Aquino's much-vaunted economic growth is bogus and hollow. His most important indicators of local economic "development" are confined to measuring the briskness of investment and lending by foreign capitalists and banks in the Philippines. This so-called development has nothing at all to do with the actual conditions of the Filipino people.

The Aquino regime's much-vaunted "growth" in 2012 was spurred by a spurt in the construction of office and condominium buildings in anticipation of the expansion of call centers. Such "growth" had no significant contribution in the expansion of employment opportunities. In fact, even as the regime was touting "economic growth," close to 900,000 people were added to the ranks of the unemployed in the third

quarter of 2012.

Aquino has also been bragging about how the stock market has surpassed its previous peak performance. But this merely shows that foreign finance capitalists have been seeking ways of making a quick profit. As shown by developments during the Ramos regime, the rapid and massive entry of "speculative capital" can only result in rapid and massive capital flight the minute investors have even the slightest indication of losing their money.

In reality, the statistics on which Aquino bases his much-trumpeted "development" are indications that the Philippines has slid even further into back-



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wardness and dependency on foreign investments and debt and is incapable of standing on its own two feet. There has been no resolution of the basic crisis of the semicolonial and semifeudal system. The Philippine economy remains backward, agrarian and unindustrialized, with no investments in the major basic industries for the production of the economy's fundamental needs. Thus, there is no dynamic job creation. Up to 12 million (or more than 30%) are either unemployed or underemployed.

Despite Aquino's rosy picture of the economy, the toiling masses remain mired in widespread poverty, hunger and joblessness. It is not they, but the foreign big capitalists and their local big businessman partners who have benefited from such growth. For the masses, Aquino's slogan of "inclusive growth" is pure hogwash. His "trickle down" theory is a lie.

The statistics do not reflect the intensity of the exploitation suffered by the toiling masses and other oppressed strata; the

exploitation of millions of peasants under the dominant feudal and semifeudal system in the countryside; low wages that are being depressed even further; inhuman and unjust working conditions; massive unemployment, skyrocketing prices of food, medicines, oil and other basic needs; lack of decent housing and clean water; and deteriorating and more costly health, education and other services.

In essence, Aquino's much-vaunted "growth" is no different from the much-touted "growth" under Gloria Arroyo's government and all other past regimes. It is no wonder that Arroyo, Aquino's former professor, has praised the way the economy is currently being managed. Like his mentor Arroyo and all regime followers of the IMF-World Bank, Aquino considers attracting foreign investments as a crucial objective of his economic policies. Even the "righteous path" slogan being repeated ad nauseam is geared towards enticing foreign capitalists to invest

in the country.

The World Bank insists that for the Philippine economy to become a fullblown "tiger," it must further liberalize land ownership, transportation and tourism. To do this, the constitution must be amended because it still imposes restrictions on foreign ownership of land and businesses, among others. Thus, although Malacañang claims that charter change is not among its priorities, it is slowly paving the way for dismantling the remaining provisions in the reactionary constitution that flimsily protect the national patrimony and economic sovereignty.

The Filipino people must thoroughly repudiate the use of statistics by the Aquino regime's reactionary technocrats to cover up the real condition of Philippine society and justify further opening the Philippines to foreign investors to exploit the country's cheap labor and natural resources. We must tirelessly pursue the struggle for patriotic and democratic economic change, for genuine land reform and national industrialization.

For the people, the real state of the economy can only be measured by ascertaining their situation in the concrete—whether they are able to enjoy their fundamental right to live under decent, human conditions.

For the people, the economy's growth can only be measured in terms of its ability to be self-reliant—not dependent on foreign debt or investment—and its ability to produce enough food and the other basic needs of the populace.

In short, for the people, there can be no genuine development without economic freedom and social justice. **AB**

	
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Foreign investments: For denationalization and privatization

Last year, the Aquino regime allocated an additional P142 billion for infrastructure projects under its Public-Private Partnership (PPP) scheme to entice foreign investors into entering joint ventures for these projects. Aquino and his economists claim that foreign capital will jumpstart the local economy, develop the corresponding industries and create demand for new industries and new employment.

Nonetheless, decades of such practice have proven that foreign investments will not bail out the bankrupt local economy. They promote the denationalization of the economy and the privatization of social services. They perpetuate the backward and non-industrial state of the local economy as a base for cheap labor and natural resources. Therefore, foreign investments are clearly not the solution that would lead to economic development. They are, in fact, the problem.

Privatization of income

The PPP scheme is one of the programs designed by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to push for the privatization of public utilities and services. Technocrats from the International Finance Institute, a corporation under the IMF, serve as consultants and provide credit to fund these projects.

Under this scheme, local bureaucrats enter into joint ventures with foreign busi-

nesses to subsume under the latter's control the rehabilitation and operation of public utilities such as roads, mass transportation and hospitals, among others. Foreign companies involved in the PPP do not bring in any new capital to the country. The type of investments they bring in to these projects have to do with changes in management and sourcing of funds.

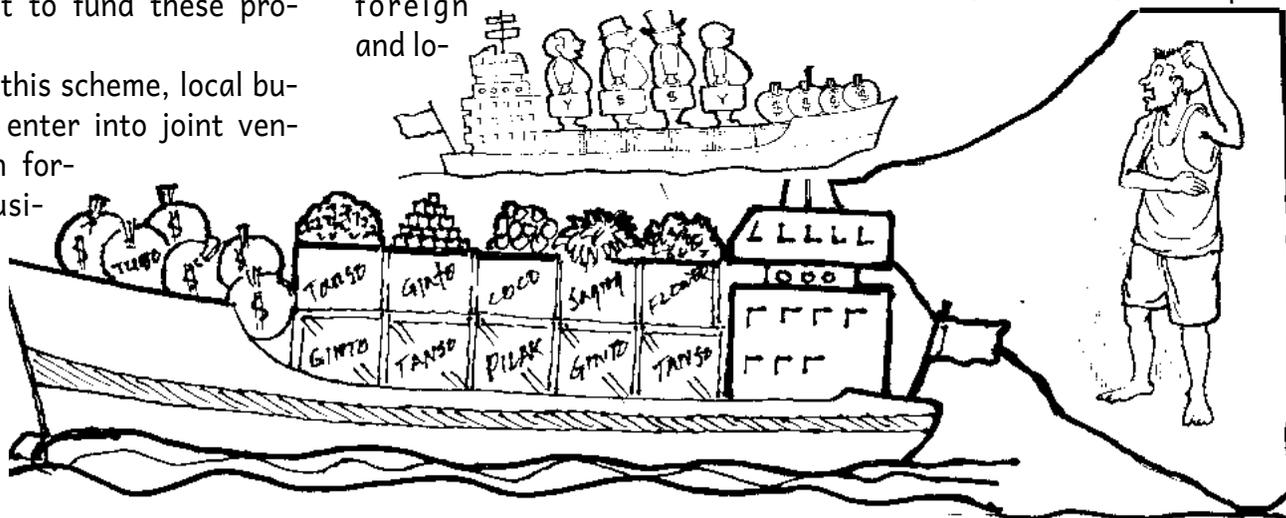
In the case of public utilities where it is the public that primarily avails of the services provided, "foreign investments" are raised using funds from the national government and insurance institutions like the GSIS. These come in the form of investments in public institutions, various subsidies, providing collateral, guarantees or direct credit to special consortiums handling all aspects of the project through securities and other financial instruments. When the foreign and lo-

cal companies default on their payments or in the case of "failed" projects, the private companies' debts are assumed by the government and the public that uses the service and utility in the form of higher fees. Worse, the government will pay the local and private corporations for their production capacity and not for the services actually consumed by the public. A striking example are the independent power producers which have been promised state subsidies for the energy they produce, whether such is utilized or not.

Foreign companies join the PPP scheme only when there is low financial risk and they are assured of income from the public's long-term use of their utilities and services. In reality, they rake in huge incomes for an indefinite period from these projects.

Denationalization of local industries

Contrary to the regime's claims, neither will foreign capital breathe life into the country's moribund and flimsy industrial base. According to the Board of Investments, a large portion (75% in 2011) of foreign capital goes to special economic zones, special enclaves focused on the local operations of foreign businesses. Most of these enclaves, however, end up in



the hands of enterprises engaged in business process outsourcing. Out of more than 200 enclaves in the country today, 134 are information technology parks/centers or call centers and offices for medical transcription and other clerical work, with only 69 export-processing zones devoted to manufacturing.

Factories and offices in the special economic zones are dependent on foreign businesses and imported materials. Except for cheap labor, local industries hardly contribute anything in most of these zones. Call centers specialize in providing clerical services to overseas clients. Factories in export-processing zones are merely part of a long assembly line of products manufactured in other countries (currently, China). Spare parts assembled in the Philippines are cheap, do not need high levels of

technology and therefore have low value added.

There is none or hardly any processing being done by foreign companies to the raw materials they export from the country. They are able to export natural resources such as agricultural products, minerals, logs and natural gas without any obstacle. The process of manufacturing and transforming minerals and natural gas to products and energy is done in their own country or elsewhere. It is in these countries that significant employment is generated, including those needing high levels of skills, and it is also here where there is high value added.

On the other hand, foreign companies enjoy tremendous benefits in the special economic zones. They are able to take advantage of cheap and docile labor due to the sheer number of

the unemployed and the relatively low cost of public utilities (compared to other countries). With the help of reactionary labor laws, workers are further squeezed, and their rights and interests suppressed.

The companies enjoy so many financial and commercial incentives from the reactionary government. Among these are exemptions from all tariffs and other taxes on imported materials, machinery and spare parts aside from exemption from all national and local taxes (up to ten years on income and corporate taxes, wharf and export taxes and VAT on their local needs). For the past several years, the reactionary government has been exacting more taxes from the masses of workers and salaried employees compared to the combined taxes of all foreign businesses. **AB**

Landgrabbing and plunder by multinational plantations

The culpability of foreign mining and logging companies and commercial plantations has several times been brought to the fore in the face of the widespread damage wrought by successive calamities. Mindanao presents a most striking case, where such companies have been engaged for decades in massive landgrabbing, plunder of natural resources and repression in connivance with the reactionary state. Most affected by the operations of these companies are the millions of peasant, Lumad and worker masses who have been subjected to exploitation, oppression and repression.

These foreign companies have wrought havoc on the island in waves. Before the onslaught of mines and large-scale plantations, Mindanao's lush forests were first denuded of high-quality logs. Since the time of the US colonialists, logging became systematic under the forest law of 1904. After almost all the forests were stripped bare, the foreign companies shifted to mining and establish-

ing vast plantations. Not content with the forest clearings, lands planted to rice and corn were later subjected to massive crop conversion and planted to export crops.

Center of multinational agribusiness corporations. Mindanao has served as the country's agribusiness center since the 1920s. In the early 1980s, the island was the source of up to 40% of the country's land area

planted to high value export crops. At present, multinational corporations like DOLE-Stanfilco, Del Monte, Sumitomo Fruits Corp. (SUMIFRU) and UNIFRUTTI are in Mindanao to produce export crops like banana, pineapple and papaya. There are other corporate plantations as well for rubber, oil palm and agrofuels.

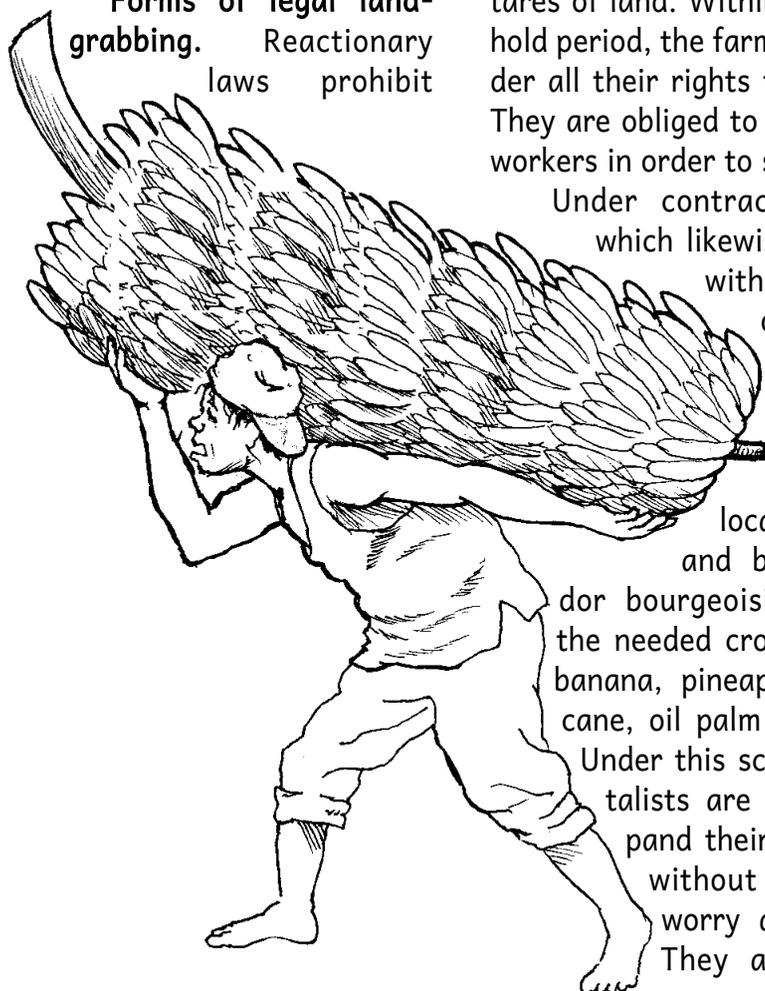
Foreign corporations developed interest in Mindanao early because of its fertile soil and favorable climate. Before the accumulated effect of the plunder of the island's natural resources took its toll and made it extremely vulnerable to climate change in the past few years, Mindanao was safe from calamities compared to other parts of the country. Aside from this,

Mindanao's backwardness presented extremely favorable conditions for the exploitation of ancestral lands and the cheap labor of the Lumad and other impoverished people.

The servility to foreign interests of the series of puppet regimes in the Philippines, including the current Aquino regime has made it easy for foreign corporations to circumvent the controversial issues of national sovereignty and the deleterious effects of their operations on the environment and the people. The Public-Private Partnership (PPP) program dovetails with the aggressive expansion of investments in agribusiness plantations in the country.

At present, plantations of export crops cover 300,000 hectares nationwide. The number excludes plantations for agrofuel which number up to 664,000 hectares and rubber plantations that are being targeted to expand to 300,000 hectares by 2016.

Forms of legal land-grabbing. Reactionary laws prohibit



foreigners from owning land in the Philippines. But foreigners have been able to disregard these laws and seize vast tracts of land on the island through various schemes, among them joint-venture, "leasehold" and contract growing.

Under joint-venture arrangements, foreign corporations and their "partner" cooperatives agree to form a third party company. The cooperative's counterpart investment is land, while the other party takes charge of technology, finances and management operations. The land is assigned a calculated value and farmers who become members of the cooperative thereby lose their right to the land. They serve as farm workers in the plantations, receiving measly wages.

"Leasing" peasants' lands. The law allows foreign companies to lease land for not more than 25 years, with the contract renewable for another 25 years for not more than 1,000 hectares of land. Within the leasehold period, the farmers surrender all their rights to the land. They are obliged to toil as farm workers in order to survive.

Under contract growing, which likewise dovetails with the policy of outsourcing, the companies avail of the services of local landlords and big comprador bourgeoisie to plant the needed crops, such as banana, pineapple, sugarcane, oil palm and cacao. Under this scheme, capitalists are able to expand their operations without having to worry about risks. They are able to

use public monies deposited at the Land Bank to capitalize this scheme. And the companies are able to avoid added labor costs to boot.

This is done by conniving with landlords to put up "grower's cooperatives" to mobilize thousands of other landholdings owned by middle and rich peasants to service and meet the plantations' need for expansion.

With the existence of lands in Mindanao comprising Agrarian Reform Communities (ARC) administered by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), no less than the DAR takes the lead in having the ARCs enter into such arrangements.

These were the methods used by Del Monte Corporation in producing pineapple in the 1920s, DOLE in the 1970s and other banana, oil palm and agrofuel plantations. Military force was likewise used to displace communities before the latter entered contracts with multinational corporations and to suppress any form of protest.

The development of large-scale agribusiness plantations has exacted a huge social and environmental cost and has meant the destruction of Lumad communities, environmental degradation and conflicts of interest.

It has pushed the concentration of land in the hands of foreign companies and their local landlord co-conspirators, and led to loss of land for thousands of poor and even rich peasants who have become farm workers and virtual slaves to the wage system in the plantations, deeply indebted and bereft of job security. **AB**

(This article is the first of a series on the situation and effects of large-scale foreign mining, logging and commercial plantation operations in Mindanao).

Law compensating rights victims approved

The reactionary Senate and Congress passed on January 28 the Human Rights Victims Reparation and Recognition Act of 2013. Representatives of progressive parties led by Bayan Muna succeeded in demanding the automatic recognition of 10,000 victims who won a class suit against Marcos in 1994 at the US District Court in Hawaii.

The new law calls for the use of ₱10 billion from the Marcoses' recovered ill-gotten wealth as damages for the victims, in accordance with the disposition of a Human Rights Compensation Board to be constituted from representatives of Task Force Detainees, Families of Victims of Involuntary Disappearances, Movement of Attorneys for Brotherhood, Integrity and Nationalism, Inc., Samahan ng Ex-Detainees Laban sa Detensyon at Aresto (SELDA) and the Free Legal Assistance Group.

The law's significance to the victims goes beyond the issue of financial compensation. It serves as a formal document acknowledging that human rights abuses really transpired during the dictatorship; that the people's struggle was just; and that their sacrifices and heroism are recognized.

Crucial to the law's progress from the time the bill was filed in 1986 was the never-ending militancy of the victims led by SELDA. Recently, SELDA condemned Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) chair Andres Bautista for saying that the victims should drop their struggle regarding the class suit because of the existence of a bill granting them compensation. **AB**

Typhoon Pablo victims are being victimized twice over by the Aquino regime

In spite of a promise from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), sacks of rice and additional relief items for victims of typhoon Pablo never arrived. The promise was made after the victims barricaded a portion of the public highway in Montevista, Compostela Valley on January 15 to call attention to their plight. Instead, the protest leaders were charged with public disorder.

Progressive groups roundly condemned the filing of charges, saying it was a sign of the Aquino government's stubborn refusal to attend to the legitimate interests of calamity victims and resolve the real reasons behind the environmental destruction that has brought great hardships to the people of Mindanao.

Meanwhile, anomalies behind the construction of bunkhouses for typhoon Pablo victims have been bared and confirmed by journalists who covered the conditions of the calamity victims and interviewed DSWD insiders. An engineer working for the DSWD reported that a structure constructed in San Rafael, Cateel, Davao Oriental cost ₱550,000, and 39 units constructed in other areas of Compostela Valley and Davao Oriental cost ₱650,000 each.

The masses and the reporters were incredulous since the structures were only made of coco lumber and plywood. One of the more obvious anomalies involved carpentry costs in San Rafael, since the units were all constructed by soldiers al-

ready receiving salaries from the government. The DSWD official reasoned out that the amount covered food allowances. But DSWD records did not contain any items on food allowances for the soldiers.

The residents were also surprised to see a ₱63,107.23 allocation for cement floors. There was no need to construct cement floors because the bunkhouses were all built on an old basketball court. There was also a budget item for the construction of corridors, another unnecessary item due to the use of the basketball court as site. This information pertains to a single bunkhouse unit. Sixty units have been constructed in the area.

In another case of corruption, 11 officers of the Philippine National Police were ordered dismissed on January 22 due to anomalies in the purchase of 75 rubber boats for the evacuation of flood victims. Among those fired for the corruption-ridden procurement in 2008 of ₱131.5 million worth of rubber boats were Police Chief Supt. Herold Ubalde and Deputy Dir. Gen. Benjamin Belarmino Jr. **AB**

Youth voluntarism for the masses and the environment

Youth, Defend the Environment, Serve the People. This call united some 300 youth who voluntarily joined a three-day mission led by Tulong Kabataan-Southern Mindanao, a campaign for youth to volunteer and become involved in helping calamity-stricken areas. They have also been conducting psychosocial therapy and discussion groups in affected communities in Compostela Valley since January 26.

Tulong Kabataan had earlier conducted relief and rehabilitation operations immediately after typhoon Pable struck areas of Compostela Valley and Davao Oriental and during the recent flooding in Davao City. The calamity resulted in up to 1,500 people killed, 834 missing and ₱40 billion worth of damage to agriculture, infrastructure and property.

The series of natural disasters in the past two years have shown them the need to further develop to a higher level political campaigns to protect the environment against continuing destruction wrought by the indiscriminate plunder of Mindanao's natural resources.

They stressed that even as they support communities hit by typhoons and floods, they are likewise taking to task the Aquino regime and companies engaged in large-scale mining and logging for their culpability in the calamities that have transpired. **AB**

NPA ambushes 57th IB Alpha Coy

A soldier was killed and two others were wounded when Red fighters of the New People's Army (NPA)-Front 72 in Mindanao ambushed a column under the 57th IB Alpha Coy conducting patrols in the mountainous areas of Barangay Cabilao, Makilala, North Cotabato on January 22. The slain casualty was identified as Pfc. Rodolfo Limlaud and the wounded were their commanding officer Lt. Dennis Matumbale and Cpl. Batotin Ebat.

The soldiers withdrew from the scene of the ambush and forced residents to collect their casualties who were left behind. In retaliation, the 57th IB later indiscriminately bombarded the mountains and the civilian communities with artillery fire, using 105 howitzers and 60 mm mortars.

The day after, two NPA units harassed two separate Philippine Army columns that were sent as reinforcements. The first harassment operation took place at 8 a.m. and the second at 1 p.m., causing an undetermined number of casualties, according to initial reports. There were no casualties on the NPA side in these three firefights.

The latest military operation by the 57th IB is a continuation of sustained combat operations against Front 72. One of the objectives is to pave the way for the further expansion in Makilala of banana plantations under the Dolefil-Stanfilco multinational company. **AB**

NPA-Negros apologizes to civilians caught in crossfire

The Leonardo Panaligan Command of the New People's Army in Negros island apologized to the families of civilians killed and wounded in an ambush launched in Barangay Puso, La Castellana, Negros Occidental on January 27.

The ambush was conducted by Red fighters against elements of the Philippine National Police (PNP) and Barangay Peacekeeping Action Team (BPAT) under the Cabacungan Police Outpost and armed village watchmen who were all aboard an Isuzu Fuzo Canter truck. Five enemy elements were killed and eight others were wounded in the ambush. Two civilians were also killed and a 14-year old boy was wounded.

The NPA confiscated seven firearms, including two M16s from two policemen.

The ambushing unit's weakness lay in its failure to detect the presence of civilians who had hitched a ride in the truck after attending the village fiesta. The NPA promised to investigate the incident, hold accountable those responsible and impose the appropriate disciplinary action and take other necessary measures.

The Leonardo Panaligan Command also promised to get in touch with the victims' relatives to provide compensation. **AB**

NPA-Rizal turns table on enemy

NPA Red fighters in Rizal province successfully turned the tables on an attacking platoon under the 16th IB in yet another military violation of the December 20-January 15 synchronized ceasefire. The clash erupted on January 12 in Kinabuan, Tanay, Rizal.

Instead of having the upper hand, the enemy sustained casualties as it cunningly violated the truce. Four soldiers were killed and three were wounded while the NPA Narciso Antazo Aramil Command suffered zero casualties.

After the defensive action, the NPA-Rizal ambushed patrolling troops under the 2nd ID Division Reconnaissance Company (DRC) on January 18 in Sitio Nayon, Barangay Sta. Inez in Tanay town. Despite belonging to an elite military unit skilled in conducting combat and strike operations, the 2nd DRC suffered one dead and two wounded, while the NPA was able to make a safe retreat. **AB**

RPA commander ambushed in Iloilo

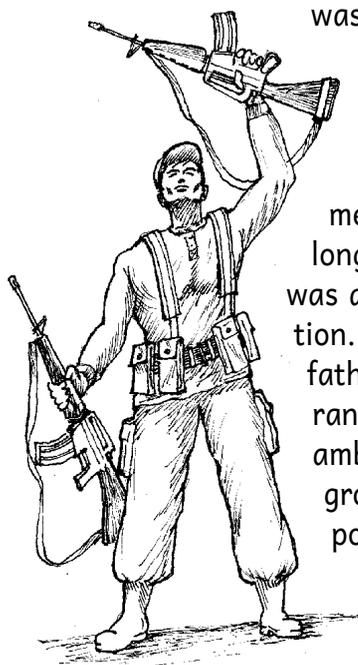
The antipeople, anti-democratic and counterrevolutionary activities of a leader of the RPA bandit group were put to a stop when he was killed by Red fighters of the New People's Army (NPA) in Tibauan, Iloilo on January 25.

Forty-five year-old Joven Tababa, provincial commander of the RPA Nilo de la Cruz-Demetrio Capilastique faction of the RPA in Iloilo was riding his motorcycle on the way home when he was blocked by an NPA team under the Napoleon Tumagtang Command in Sitio Alegria, Barangay Bagacay.

Evading arrest by the NPA, Tababa screeched to a stop, veering his motorcycle on its side. He ran away, leaving behind his seven-year old daughter who was with him. While he was running, he was seen to be taking something out of his bag. But he stumbled and was fired upon by the Red fighters. Before they opened fire, the NPA team made sure that Tababa's daughter was out of harm's way.

Seized from the fallen RPA commander was a cal .45 pistol, magazines and ammunition.

As the leader of a gang of hitmen, Tababa was responsible for a long list of murders in Iloilo. His group was also involved in holdups and extortion. Among his murder victims were a father and son, both farmers from Barangay Pandan, Leon, Iloilo who were ambushed and killed in 2006. Tababa's group has been active in military and police operations against the revolutionary movement since the latter half of the 1990s. **AB**



Military kills civilian

The military mercilessly killed a former member of the New People's Army while continuously subjecting Lumad communities in North Cotabato to artillery bombardment. These are just some of the latest reports culled by *Ang Bayan*.

February 4. Seven members of the Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap were nabbed while they were gathered near Gate 7 of Malacañang. They were waiting in a restaurant for the arrival of their companions when they were arrested. They were released later in the day after their comrades rallied in front

of the Manila Police District.

January 25. Two men aboard a motorcycle shot Herminio "Dodo" Autillo at close range while he was having a haircut in his yard in Barangay New Janiuay, M'lang, North Cotabato.

The NPA Valentin Palamine Command strongly condemned the killing of Autillo, a former

NPA member. Before he joined the NPA, he was a peasant activist. It had been more than a decade since he left the NPA and he had been living as an ordinary civilian in his village. Nonetheless, he was targeted for surveillance and elimination by the military.

Military troops were then conducting operations in New Janiuay and ordered Autillo to surrender. Despite threats, he refused to surrender. His name was included in the order of battle on suspicion that he was still active in the revolutionary movement and was involved in

the series of defeats suffered by the military in clashes with the NPA in Makilala.

January 25. A nine-year old girl suffered a gunshot wound during intense military operations in Sitio Alang-alang, Barangay Kisante, Makilala, North Cotabato. The Lumad girl was hit in the left ear and is currently under treatment at a hospital in Kidapawan City.

January 22. Defeated troops of the 57th IB Alpha Coy bombarded communities and farmlands of some 100 peasant families in Barangay Cabilao, Makilala, North Cotabato. The military used 105 mm howitzers and 60 mm mortars. The attack forced the residents to evacuate to the village center. The soldiers also destroyed the masses' corn, peanut and rubber crops.

January 22 and 24. Armed men abducted Sheikh Bashier Mursalum, an Islamic scholar and principal of a madrasah (Muslim school) in Labuan, Zamboanga City on January 22. Two days after, policemen illegally arrested Muin Kahal Hamja, 40, in Barangay Kumalarang, Isabela City in Basilan.

The two victims are accused of being members of the bandit Abu Sayyaf group, an allegation vehemently denied by their relatives. The Kawagib-Moro Human Rights Alliance condemned the abductions, which took place despite the approval by the Aquino regime in December of the Anti-Enforced Disappearance Act.

Last week of December to first week of January. Elements of the 16th, 56th and 58th IB conducted combat operations along the boundary of Montalban, Rizal and San Jose del Monte City in Bulacan, setting up camp at barangay halls and day-care centers. They terrorized civilians suspected of supporting the New People's Army and stopped residents from passing through the boundary area.

Another combat operation was conducted by the 16th IB on December 25 in a number of villages in Tanay, Rizal, while troops under the PNP Special Action Force launched operations in Barangay San Jose, Antopolo City from December 25 to January 16. AB

Acosta released

After almost two years of illegal detention, Acultural activist Ericson Acosta was released on February 5 after the Department of Justice decided to dismiss charges of illegal possession of explosives filed against him by the regional court in Gandara, Samar. Acosta was arrested on February 11, 2011 in San Jorge, Samar along with a number of local farmers. He was maliciously linked to the New People's Army and a grenade was planted in his person. The DOJ dismissed the military's case against Acosta for lack of merit.

Acosta has been in Manila since January 18. His lawyers demanded that he be brought to the National Kidney and Transplant Institute for treatment. He suffers from nephritis.

Acosta's release was the result of a relentless campaign by the Free Acosta Movement, which has also been fighting for the release of other political prisoners. The Free Acosta Movement is composed of artists and progressive activists.

Acosta was only one of 340 political prisoners illegally detained under the Arroyo and Aquino regimes. Among them are 14 consultants of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines protected by the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees. AB

Mendiola Massacre commemorated

Peasants and progressive organizations launched protest actions in Mendiola on January 22 to commemorate the 26th anniversary of the Mendiola Massacre. They demanded justice for the victims, and for all peasants who up to now are being suppressed and exploited under the current system. More than 13 farmers were killed and 39 were wounded in the massacre, after military and police forces under former president Corazon Aquino opened fire at a rally demanding genuine land reform in January 1987.

The rallyists also demanded the immediate distribution of Hacienda Luisita and other estates that should have long been given to the farmers. In the past 30 years, it is the current US-Aquino regime that has had the slowest rate of land distribution, giving out only 14,942 hectares per month. Only 33% of these lands are from big landlords in power.

To create the impression that it is doing something to resolve the problem of landlessness, the US-Aquino regime issued Administrative Order No. 34 creating the Inter-Agency Committee on Institutional Arrangements for Land Management and Rural Development. The inter-agency committee or "superbody" aims to make the people believe that the land reform program is being implemented. One of its provisions involves setting up support services in the

countryside. This propagates the lie that the stage of land distribution is over and the only thing left to do is to provide agricultural services to beneficiaries.

The protesters also assailed continuing land-grabbing in Mindanao by multinational corpora-

tions. In particular, Anakbayan and Kilusang Mayo Uno lambasted current plans to revive banana and coconut plantations as well as foreign-owned mining and logging companies instead of comprehensively addressing the problems of residents whose livelihoods were destroyed by typhoon Pablo. **AB**

Peasants storm NAPC

Peasants led by the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) and the Coco-Levy Funds Ibalik sa Amin (CLAIM) stormed the office of the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) in Quezon City on January 31 to demand the abolition of the Presidential Task Force on the Coco-Levy Funds and stop it from stealing the monies that should properly go to small coconut farmers. With their placards and streamers, the rallyists succeeded in barging into and occupying the office lobby where they aired their grievances.

The rallyists said the task force is nothing but a criminal syndicate set up by Malacasñang to hoodwink coconut farmers demanding the immediate distribution of the coco levy fund, now worth ₱56.5 billion. The fund is from 27% of San Miguel Corporation shares owned by Marcos crony Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco Jr. On top of this is a ₱13.5 billion dividend held at the Coconut Planters Bank (UCPB) earning 3.5-3.6% annually.

The rallyists assailed NAPC chief Joel Rocamora for taking ₱1.6 billion from the fund, which will surely be used by the Akbayan party in the May elections. Rocamora is a high-ranking officer of Akbayan. The NAPC claims that it will be using the money to push the ₱11-billion five-year "Poverty Reduction Road Map of the Coconut Industry" comprising the Conditional Cash Transfer Program, the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program and the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program Extension with Reforms (CARPER).

KMP and CLAIM demanded the immediate distribution of the funds through social programs that would benefit poor coconut farmers such as pensions and medical and education services.

Meanwhile, Anakbayan bared the existence of the "Akbayan Mafia" composed of a number of highly placed Akbayan officials assigned to the NAPC and other government agencies benefiting from the coco levy fund. **AB**

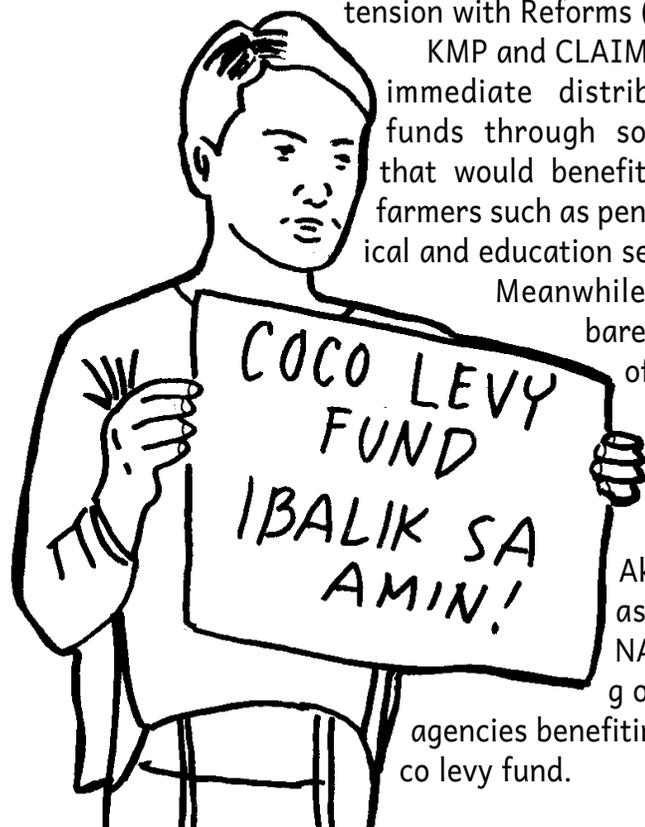
Mining company booted out

A community of national minorities succeeded in expelling a mining company after more than a year of continuous struggle. The Mandaymen minorities under the Save Mankayan Movement (SMM) caused the withdrawal of Far Southeast Gold Resources Inc. (FSGRI) from Sitio Mandaymen, Tabio, Mankayan, Benguet.

The Mandaymen had been barricading their community for a year to get rid of the company. They began their barricades on January 23, 2012 to guard their community and bar the entry of FSGRI. Weeks later, they formed the SMM.

In the Terms of Reference that were drawn up, both parties agreed on a total pullout of drilling machinery and other equipment from Mandaymen and their removal from Mankayan. Aside from the pullout of the machinery, the agreement calls for the rehabilitation of the area by FSGRI. The residents will make sure of this by conducting monthly monitoring for a year.

Nonetheless, the minorities' struggle against the mining companies' seizure of ancestral lands is far from over. FSGRI has announced that it would be transferring its machinery to other areas it could exploit. It holds a Mineral Production Sharing Agreement (MPSA-001) for the area granted by the Mines and Geosciences Bureau and can conduct drilling operations in other sites within its concession area. **AB**



Reject US offers of compensation for the destruction of Tubbataha Reef



The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) called for the rejection of compensation offered by the US government for the destruction by the US Navy of Tubbataha Reef and demanded the expulsion of American troops from the country. The US offered compensation to avoid paying fines stipulated under Philippine law for the unauthorized entry of its warship USS Guardian at the Tubbataha Reefs Wildlife Park on January 18 and the destruction of up to half a hectare of coral reef.

The compensation offer of \$100,000 or ₱4 million is being portrayed as "assistance" in the rehabilitation of the coral reefs damaged at Tubbataha. Alongside the offer of compensation, the US reportedly plans to install a US Peace Corps-like "volunteer group" that would "guard" the area to prevent other vessels running aground.

Instead of taking the US to task, the puppet Aquino government has even been helping the US military evade responsibility

for illegally entering Tubbataha. The Aquino government has no plans of charging the US Navy for its violations of Philippine law and its destruction of the coral reefs.

Aquino's officials have called on US critics not to harp on the issue of filing charges against the US because this might anger the latter into refusing to provide compensation. Aquino himself has supported US plans of giving compensation and expressed openness at US

plans to install the "volunteer guards."

Meanwhile, two other US naval vessels have docked at Subic Bay after the USS Guardian ran aground. The USS Cheyenne, a nuclear submarine, docked at Subic Bay on February 1. This was followed by another docking four days later of the warship USS Stockdale.

The more frequent dockings of warships and submarines of the US Navy have spurred various protest actions. Progressive organizations have launched a series of protests in front of the US Embassy to assail the presence of US military forces in the country and the Aquino regime's puppetry.

They flailed at the Aquino government for its failure to charge and hold accountable the American soldiers responsible for the USS Guardian's running aground at Tubbataha.

On January 21, various progressive and environmentalist groups launched a march-rally to demand the abrogation of the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) and sanctions against the US Navy for the destruction it has caused. Members of the League of Filipino Students (LFS) also launched a lightning rally on January 25, throwing paint at the logo of the US Embassy on Roxas Boulevard, Manila.

Another protest action was held by students, teachers and employees of the University of the Philippines in Diliman on January 30 to condemn the US ship's running aground at Tubbataha Reef. AB

ILPS condemns US, French intervention in Mali

The International League of People's Struggle (ILPS) vehemently condemned French military aggression in Mali, a country in West Africa. The US had also earlier pledged to send 3,500 American troops in the country in the name of "humanitarian intervention."

France began its aggression by its relentless aerial bombings and commando operations in northern and central Mali. The United Nations estimates that up to 230,000 people have been forced to evacuate due to the aggression.

France's main objective is to ensure the continued flow of needed minerals from Mali and has been using the fight against "Islamic terrorists" as a mere pretext. France and the US invoked the same reasons for bombing and destroying Libya. France aims to seize and monopolize the oil and uranium reserves and other strategic minerals in Mali.

French and US military aggression and intervention in Mali have only succeeded in stoking the fires of people's struggles in the country. A big number of military officers and men of the central government have joined the struggle. France faces the possibility of being trapped in Mali in ways more dangerous than in Iraq, Afghanistan or Somalia.

The French and US military aggression in Mali violates the people's national sovereignty and the country's territorial integrity. It only serves the economic, political and other interests of the imperialists, unleashes wanton destruction of human lives and social infrastructure and inflicts terrible suffering and hardship on the people.

The ILPS demanded the withdrawal of the imperialists from Mali and a stop to the bombings, troop deployment and the slaughter of the people. It expressed its solidarity and support for their struggle for national and social liberation. It believes that amid the turmoil in Mali, the people will realize their aspirations and defeat the imperialists and the local reactionaries.

Mali is a country that is twice the size of France with a population of up to 15.5 million. More than half of them live on less than a dollar a day (or less than ₦42 daily).

Mali is Africa's third biggest gold producer. Based on a study by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) in 2011, the world's third biggest uranium and oil deposits lie beneath the deserts of northern Mali and the eastern part of neighboring

Niger. With more than 70% of electricity in France and in the entire European Union sourced from nuclear energy using uranium as fuel, there is a need to expand annually.

Northern Mali is populated by the Tuareg tribe which has long been struggling for their right to self-determination. The Movement for National Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) was able to control a number of cities in early 2012. Subsequently, a number of Islamic groups took the initiative and controlled key areas around Gao and the city of Timbuktu.

As a result of the MNLA's victories in early 2012, the government in the capital of Bamako in the south went into turmoil. Capt. Amadou Sanogo, a US-trained military officer, led a military coup in Bamako, overthrowing President Amadou Toumani Toure. Since then, the government has become unstable despite the close ties of the US Africa Command with the military, which depends on the US for training, arms and funding. AB

