

Editorial

Turn independent foreign policy declaration into concrete measures

The revolutionary forces welcome GRP President Duterte's declaration for an independent foreign policy and his opposition to all forms of foreign meddling. This policy is one of the items in the national democratic program long espoused by the Party and the NDFP.

In line with his declaration, Duterte announced that the Philippine military will no longer participate in the US-led "joint patrols" in the South China Sea. He also announced his government's openness to purchase arms from Russia and China. He also said American soldiers in Mindanao "have to go."

It is up to Duterte to thoroughly translate his independent foreign policy into a comprehensive program upholding Philippine sovereignty in the fields of economy, politics, military, culture and foreign affairs. If concretized, it will bring about historical and profound changes.

Duterte must end US military intervention which aims to use the Philippines as a platform for intervention, wars of aggression and power-projection in the Asia-Pacific and other parts of the world.

The Philippines cannot claim to have an independent foreign policy if it is aligned and bound to the US military in unequal treaties such as the Mutual Defence Treaty, the Visiting Forces Agreement, Mutual Logistics Support

Agreement (MLSA) and the Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement (EDCA). It is within Duterte's powers to rescind the MLSA and EDCA.

Duterte must follow through his pronouncement that American soldiers in Mindanao will have to go. The Filipino people must push for the removal of all American soldiers in the entire country. They are stationed in various military camps and facilities and are involved in the counter-guerrilla war.

All US warships and jetfighters, drones, bombs and other military equipment stored in facilities in various parts of the country must also be removed.

Duterte must order the transfer of American serviceman Joseph Scott Pemberton, who murdered Jennifer Laude, from a US detention facility inside Camp Aguinaldo to a regular cell under Philippine government authority.

Duterte must end AFP reliance on US military aid. He is correct in asserting the right of the Philippines to buy weapons from wherever it decides and not only from the US. The US "counter-insurgency" doctrine which uses the armed forces to suppress the struggle for national and social liberation must also be opposed.

Duterte can lead in forging a declaration among countries calling for the removal of all war vessels of the US, China and other countries in the South China Sea. He can lead in the revival of a Non-Aligned



Movement type of association of countries which do not host foreign troops and is not aligned to any country.

Duterte is justified in opposing US meddling in government affairs, in the elections and in influencing laws and policies. US diplomatic and political pressure to goad or compel the Philippine government to serve its geopolitical interests must be exposed.

Measures to end US economic domination can be pursued. Duterte must reject the neoliberal policies being pushed by the US under the GATT, WTO, APEC and TPP and by China through the RCEP. Repudiate the agenda behind pro-US programs such as the Partnership for Growth. Reject demands to amend the 1987 constitution to remove provisions prohibiting foreign ownership of

resources that should benefit the Filipino people.

Duterte can insist on the right to trade with whichever country without having to notify the US or seek its permission or consider its foreign policy. The Philippines can enter into mutually beneficial economic agreements for an exchange of oil and other resources with countries as Venezuela, Iran, Russia, China, North Korea and others opposed by the US.

The Duterte regime must seek to

end reliance on the IMF and other IMF-affiliated banks and institutions, without cutting ties with them. Philippine links with non-US affiliated institutions and banks such as the Asian International Infrastructure Bank can be strengthened.

Duterte can push for mutual and equal relations with China without being tied to it. Mutually-beneficial investment and trade agreements can be forged. Protection of the country's patrimony against relentless abuse and plunder, compliance with health, labour and environmental standards, immediate and long-term benefit to the local economy including technology-sharing and -transfer must be ensured at all times. Usurious loans and those tied to oppressive conditions must not be allowed.

Duterte is opening an opportunity to push

for a renaissance of Filipino nationalism: a commitment to ending the history of colonial and semicolonial rule to attain national freedom. Duterte must support and work with the patriotic forces to advance a widespread campaign for nationalist education and study of the history of resistance against the brutal occupation and semicolonial rule of the US in the Philippines over one hundred years since 1899.

Through peace negotiations, he can unite with the NDFP in comprehensive agreements to implement measures that will uphold national sovereignty. While the revolutionary and progressive forces are ready to cooperate in upholding and practicing an independent foreign policy, they will remain militant and vigorous in advancing anti-imperialist struggles in order to attain national freedom and social justice.



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Nationwide protests against US troops

Simultaneous protest actions were launched by national-democratic organizations in Manila, Davao, Cagayan de Oro, Sorsogon and other cities on September 16 to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the rejection of the Military Bases Agreement (MBA) which ended 55 years of US military bases' existence in the Philippines and to denounce the reinstallation and return of US bases and troops in the country.

In Manila, protesters gathered in front of the US embassy. They slammed agreements that continue to give free rein to basing and entry-exit of US troops in the Philippines such as the Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), Mutual Logistics Support Agreement and Mutual Defence Treaty.

They took notice of the EDCA that resurrected the MBA by allowing the installation of US military bases and facilities within AFP camps. The rejection of the MBA in 1991 was borne out of a long history of the people's opposition to the US military bases in the Philippines. This pushed the Senate to reject the extension of the agreement with the US.

Unremitting people's opposition

Since the beginning when the US imposed its bundle of unequal military agreements on the Philippines, the Filipino people's opposition have been unrelenting.

On January 18, 1933, students held a rally against the ratification of the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Act which, among others, set an indefinite period for the presence of military and naval bases even after the US 'grants' independence to the Philippines. On April 9, 1949, Sen. Claro M. Recto initiated the denunciation of the MBA that was ratified on March 14, 1947. Recto also stood against the Mutual Defence

Treaty of 1951.

Under the MBA, more or less 22 military bases and installations all over the Philippines were placed under US government control. A total land area of a size bigger than Singapore and Hong Kong combined became US territory on Philippine soil.

The biggest US military and naval bases in the world were run within these areas. And because they were US territory, the Philippines had no legal authority on whatever crimes and intrusions the US did inside and around the bases.

The spirit of nationalism flourished in the 1960s. The US military bases and domination of US imperialism in the Philippines became constant issues in youth organizations' protest actions. Youth and workers repeatedly held rallies in front of the US embassy and Clark Air Base to protest the Laurel-Langley Agreement, MBA and other forms of US control over the Philippines, as well as the US war of aggression against Vietnam. During this period, the Kabataang Makabayan, Movement for the Advancement of Nationalism or MAN, and other organizations were founded, further stimulating nationalism.

Protests against US military bases were not quelled during the US-Marcos dictatorship. Calls to dismantle the US bases featured well in the movement for Marcos' ouster in the 1970's till 1986 as

Atrocities and Crimes of US Military Forces

(1899-1913)
PHILIPPINE-AMERICAN WAR

600,000 Luzon MASSACRED

Batangas	300,000
Bud Dajo, Jolo	900
Bud Bagsak, Jolo	2,000
Laksamana, Sulu	400
Balangiga, Samar	All males above ten
Miag-ao, Iloilo	
Talipao, Jolo	

HAMLETTING

Whole province of Laguna and Batangas
Marinduque
300,000 Albay
±9,000 died from hunger and disease

1/6 Luzon decimated
1900-1901 **666,000**

► Batangas 100,000

RAZED

Entire towns of Igaras, Iloilo
Taguig, Marikina, Malabon, Rizal
Batangas
Balangiga, Samar
20 towns in Bohol

(1947-1991)
MILITARY BASES AGREEMENT

30 killed
Rape

(1998-present)
UFA AND EDCA

Raped "Nicole" and "Vanessa" 2005

Bombed

Datu Piang, Maguindanao, Maimbung, Sulu 2008
Butian Marsh, Maguindanao, 2004 at 2005
Umapoy Island, Tawi-tawi 2004

Killed

Arsid Baharun	2004
Sardiya Abu Calderon	2004
Bizma Juhan	2006
Gregan Cardeño	2010
Jennifer Laude	2014

these were perceived to prop up the latter's rule.

The strong momentum of the anti-bases movement was a factor in the inclusion of provisions against foreign bases and nuclear arms in the 1987 Constitution.

Activities of the anti-military bases movement were continuous especially in 1990-1991 at the ap-

proach of the MBA expiration and the US-Aquino regime's lobby for its extension. For one whole year, protest actions erupted in various places all over the country. A broad anti-treaty alliance came to life. Bayan and national democratic organizations led rallies, marches and other forms of protest. Many anti-US bases songs, books, visual art pieces, plays and films were created.

At the day of the Senate vote to extend or terminate the MBA, 150,000 people flooded the grounds outside the Senate to oppose the US military bases. This surpassed the rally shamelessly led by President Corazon Aquino herself in favor of the MBA.

Continuing protests

Though the activities decreased, protests against the military bases and presence of American soldiers in the Philippines continued. Protests emerged against the abandoned 'toxic waste' poisoning the land within Clark, Subic and other military bases.

Protests against the US' drive to re-establish the permanent presence of its military troops, vessels and equipment in the Philippines are bound to rise. The MLSA and Status of Forces Agreement were later replaced by the VFA which was approved by the senate in 1998 despite massive protest actions.

Big and small protest actions continue against the Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines (JSOTF-P) inside Camp Navarro in Zamboanga which retains 900 American soldiers. The murders, abuses and rapes involving American soldiers also fuelled protest actions in various parts of the country. AB

RCEP's neoliberal agenda

IN RODRIGO DUTERTE'S speech during the Association of Southeast Asian Nations meeting on September 6, one of the matters he paid attention to was the establishment of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

The RCEP is an agreement in progress between the ASEAN countries and China, Japan, India, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand. Negotiations started in 2012 and are expected to conclude by 2017.

The RCEP is closely linked with Japanese efforts to secure a free trade agreement with ASEAN since the last decade. At present, China is primarily behind the negotiations. The agreement is touted as an alternative to the US-led Trans Pacific Partnership which excludes China. The US is shut out of the RCEP.

Sixteen nations are in negotiations within the RCEP, as against TPP's 12. They comprise 50% of the world's population, 30% of global GDP and 29% of international trade.

Even as China poses the RCEP as an alternative to the TPP, it actually champions the same neoliberal policies. It aims to implement trade, services and investment liberalization according to previous bankrupt agreements such as the GATT and GATS.

In particular, the RCEP is pushing for zero tariffs to facilitate and systematize big corporations' profit-making from the tax-free and unhampered flow of capital and goods.

It serves the "Factory Asia" concept wherein production in different countries compose a single production line similar to a single



factory. Big capital are always on the lookout for cheap labour for the production of one or several parts of a single commodity.

At present, trade fragmentation in East and South East Asia stands at 62%. The RCEP promotes economic 'integration' among Asian countries to consolidate product linkages and facilitate the flow of assembled parts among different countries.

The Philippines is part of "Factory Asia." The manufacturing subsector which largely focuses on commodity parts and components assembly, specifically electronic parts, is primarily part of this international production line. Up to 56% of these are exported to China, and some to Thailand and South Korea.

China is the Philippines' biggest trading partner, if exports to Hong Kong are included. It is now one of the countries taking advantage of the Philippines' backward production system. Due to the Philippines' lack of basic industries, it is dependent on importing parts for local semi-manufactures for export. This has resulted into a chronic trade deficit. Its trade deficit with China is up to \$5 billion. AB

Factional struggles intensify under the Duterte regime

OVER THE PAST few weeks, factional struggles within the ruling classes have escalated under the Duterte regime. Duterte's attacks and counter-attacks against his political rivals are blatant, especially those whom he categorized as yellow in the Liberal Party (LP).

Recently, Duterte openly accused the LP of planning his ouster in order to install Vice-President Leni Robredo of the LP. According to the Duterte camp, Fil-Ams in New York are planning to oust Duterte before January 2017.

Last September 19, Duterte's arch adversary Sen. Leila de Lima was ousted as chair of the Committee on Justice and Human Rights upon the instigation of Duterte's senate allies. After weeks of hitting de Lima and accusing her of involvement in illegal drugs, an "investigation" in Congress was started where witnesses were lined up and made to testify against her.

Earlier, de Lima, who was a secretary under the previous regime, led an investigation into widespread killings of illegal drugs suspects. She summoned a witness who was introduced as a former member of

the "Davao Death Squad."

According to the witness, the DDS was directly under Duterte and was composed of police, former soldiers, paramilitary men and others used to summarily kill suspects. Duterte's allies derailed these hearings even before these gained momentum.

These political attacks and counter-attacks are indicative of the intensifying rivalries among the ruling classes amidst worsening crisis of the ruling system and efforts of the Duterte regime to rapidly consolidate its power in the bureaucracy, police and military and lay out the fundamental policies of his regime.

The ruling classes in the Philippines have long been divided into rival factions that unite or disunite depending on how those in state power favor their economic in-

terests in businesses, government contracts and others.

For a long time, the only thing that unites the various rival factions is their loyalty to their US masters. They toe the US line.

A new aspect in the ruling class rivalries has emerged with Duterte's rise to power. Duterte is not only dismissive of the US, he also outrightly denounces US meddling and rule in the Philippines. The US cannot easily make him toe the line.

The rivalries are rapidly escalating amid similarly intensifying rivalries among the imperialist powers, particularly between the US and emergent imperialist China.

Thus Duterte's pursuit of an independent foreign policy, opening up to China and other countries even without shutting doors to the US, is being firmly opposed by pro-US politicians and groups.

Such opposition is to ensure that the Philippines will remain within the sphere of influence and hegemony of the US. AB

Calls for Mary Jane's freedom reverberate

ON SEPTEMBER 13, students led by the College Editors Guild of the Philippines held a picket protest in front of Malacañang to urge President Rodrigo Duterte to exhaust all avenues for Mary Jane Veloso's removal from death row, citing that it is within his powers as the country's president.

According to the CEGP, Duterte's reliance on Indonesian laws is akin to giving up on Mary Jane's struggle to gain reprieve from her case and disregarding the Filipino people's efforts to stay her execution.

Duterte's and Indonesian President Joko Widodo's conflicting statements first worried Mary Jane's supporters and family as to the possible outcome of Veloso's case. The newspaper Jakarta Post reported President Widodo as saying that President Duterte gave a "go-signal" for Veloso's execution.

On September 14, President Widodo clarified that Duterte's statement during their meeting was to follow the laws of their country on Veloso's case. According to the National Union of People's Lawyers, seeking clemency for the victim does not conflict with punishing abusers.

Migrante encouraged Duterte to do everything within his capacity to win the case against Mary Jane's recruiters. Winning the case would affirm Mary Jane's innocence and save her from death row. Veloso's recruiters are currently facing human trafficking, estafa and illegal recruitment charges. AB

NPA-Bicol holds officers' training



For some weeks in the second quarter of this year, Red commanders and officers of the New People's Army in Bicol equipped themselves with knowledge and skills. More than 40 front-level commanders and officers completed the Basic Officer's Course. The training aimed to further strengthen the NPA in Bicol, particularly in building guerrilla fronts in the region.

The emphasis on guerrilla front-building wherein the people's army plays a major role stands out for Ka Kaloy, one of the participating officers. "The Party's leadership over the NPA is vital in building solid revolutionary mass organizations in the region's key terrains. These guerrilla bases will be the foundations for the wave-upon-wave expansion of the people's war," he clarifies.

One of the topics initially discussed was the review of the revolutionary movement's history in the region, the current conditions and the tasks and challenges in advancing the Bicolano people's struggle. For Ka Russel, a commander of one of the provincial guerrilla units, it is important that all commanders and officers from different areas understand the regional situation. He thinks that this will help solve the limited awareness due to the officers' confined areas of operations. Instead, said Ka Russel, "comrades foster concern towards develop-

ments in other provinces."

In this regard, comrades imparted methods on how to promptly replace Red fighters who are transferred to other areas, how to confront intensified enemy operations, and how to develop coordination between adjacent guerrilla fronts.

Aside from these, there was an abundance in subject matters, activities and trainings throughout the weeks. From daily physical exercises, individual trainings and day-long lectures, to the familiarization of modern military equipment and enhancement of intel, offensive and defensive plans. There were also workshops on resolving issues that affect the masses and comrades.

All these are geared towards sharpening the minds and developing physical fitness necessary for effective performance of their tasks. Cultural activities likewise abounded in the training. The Basic Officer's Course brought about *Alab* (Fervor), a collection of art and literature

performed or produced by the students during lecture intervals. Amusing moments, banter and surprise performances were also present.

For Ka Russel, discussions on troop leadership were remarkable. Indeed, how are newly-recruited fighters developed? "Ideological consolidation is foremost. He or she must immediately be given Party education. Aside from this, it is also important that the comrade be issued a firearm, and be given politico-military training."

Ka Kaloy, for his part, adds that politico-military training, as well as the completion of army mechanisms such as the medical and logistics staffs, will resolve the Red fighters' hesitance in following orders, especially during combat.

Ka Russel has some more to suggest: "Allow the comrade to excel in various tasks," he said, "not only in sentry or kitchen duty; it is also important to involve him in the evaluation of his performance of tasks and to conduct criticisms; also, it is essential that the comrade is encouraged to open up on any problem, whether regarding the unit or the family." Such methods are already being done, states Ka Russel, and it is just a matter of carrying them on.

Meanwhile, Ka Raymundo Buenafuerza, spokesperson of the Romulo Jallores Command, said that trainings for the people's army in the region will continue, regardless of a ceasefire. Among those slated for trainings are the people's militias.

It is expected that in the coming months and years, the commanders and officers who have recently completed the course will be able to demonstrate the fruits of their politico-military training. AB

AFP continues operations

DESPITE THE GRP'S declaration of a unilateral ceasefire, offensive military operations continue in various parts of the country.

Sorsogon. Military elements of the 31st IB remain in Barangay San Antonio, Barcelona and Barangays Sinibaran, Bonot, Coron-Coron, Cabagahan and Bariis in Matnog. Last September 15, armed troops of the AFP returned to Barangay Calateo, Juban after being away for a few days. In Gubat, from September 13, AFP offensives persist in Barangays Sangat, Cabigaan and Tiris. By using the "peace and development" cover, soldiers carry out surveillance operations, harassment and sow fear in the said communities.

Kalinga. Residents of Barangay Uma filed a petition to remove encamped 50th IB soldiers from their community. According to residents, soldiers occupied seven houses, an elementary school and a church. They added that soldiers were abusive, so they want them to leave the area.

Other human rights violations include several harassment cases; threats and intimidation against several individuals especially members of the Ag-agama Community Organization (AGCO); and creating fear and chaos in the community, because of their regular afternoon and evening patrols. Residents cannot tend to their farms because of fear.

Last August 17, soldiers pointed their rifles towards a student while on his way to school. On September 11, Marcos Aggalao, 73 years old and a former member of New People's Army who retired last 2012, was arrested and charged with trumped-up cases.

In a statement released by the Lejo Cawilan Command, Aggalao's

arrest violates the Comprehensive Agreement on the Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL). Aside from his advanced age, he also suffers from hypertension and ulcer which have significantly weakened him.

Ilocos Sur. Last September 5, troops from the 70th IB launched operations in Barangay Namitpit, Quirino town. Soldiers harassed farmers, including Ronald Lacbao, whom they accused of being an NPA member. Soldiers are also forcing male residents to join the CAFGU. The 70th IB threatened them that only by joining the CAFGU can they clear their names. Soldiers also conduct regular patrols in the community.

Farmers are afraid of what the soldiers might do to them. A resident said, "What if they get irked, and one night just decide to shoot us, drop packets of shabu beside our corpses, and claim they killed us because we were drug pushers? The police, the army, they can do anything, they do not respect human rights."

AFP troops from 5th ID are still present in the provinces of Isabela, Cagayan, Apayao, Kalinga, Mountain Province, Ifugao and Benguet.



State agents kill peasant leader in Isabela

ANOTHER FARMER WAS murdered by military agents this September. Last September 7, Ariel Diaz was shot dead by three motorcycle-riding men in his farm in Villa Pereda, Delfin Albano town. The murder happened only five days after the massacre by AFP troops of four farmers in Nueva Ecija.

Diaz is the chairman of Danggayang Dagiti Mannalon (DAGAMI), a local chapter of Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) in Isabela. He also heads the Intermunicipal Peasant Alliance against Foreign Landgrabbing in Isabela.

According to Antonio Flores, secretary general of KMP, the rising trend of extrajudicial killings of farmers under the Duterte administration is alarming.

"Both the killings in Isabela and Nueva Ecija are linked to agrarian disputes with the perpetrators believed to be either hired goons or state security forces that serve as private armies of landgrabbers," Flores added.

Diaz and the DAGAMI are actively campaigning against landgrabbing not only in Delfin Albano but also in the towns of Ilagan, Tumauni and Quirino. The group has just recently earned a series of victories on their campaign to occupy their lands and cultivate food for consumption even though the state persistently denies them the right to the said lands.

In KMP's investigation last 2011 and 2012, it was revealed that the vast rice and corn lands in Isabela were arrogated by GFII, Ecofuel Development Corp., Itochu Corp., JGC Corp., Philippine Bioethanol and Energy Investments Corp. and GCO Taiwan Holding Company.

Protests against coal-fired power plants

KALIKASAN PEOPLE'S NETWORK for the Environment (Kalikasan PNE) and other environmental groups launched a series of protests last September 8 and 9 to oppose the ongoing operation of coal-fired power plants. Groups urged the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to issue a moratorium against these plants. Also, they revealed once again the extreme pollution and other ill effects caused by the plants on the environment and health of residents in the area.

Among the protest actions held by the organizations are a forum in Baclaran, a picket in front of the Department of Energy office in Taguig and a dialogue with DENR officials in Quezon City. During the dialogue, the group presented the initial result of their 4-day investigation on the affected communities in Calaca last September 1 to 4.

In Batangas, environment advocates opposed the operation of two coal fired power plants in the area. The groups said that the Sem-Calaca coal fired power plant in Barangay San Rafael owned by David M. Consunji, Inc. Holdings, have already been causing heavy pollution. This grew worse when the 135-mw Southern Luzon Thermal Energy Corp., owned by Ayala and its partner Phinma Group in Puting Bato, West Village, began operation.

Meanwhile, Panalipdan-South Mindanao condemned the illegal arrest of one of their members last September 19. Soldiers arrested John Claudio Maniquez, 21, while putting up posters for an upcoming peace forum in Pantukan, Compostela Valley. He was charged with illegal possession of firearms. His two companions are still missing. **AB**

Further cuts for already low health budget in 2017

IN THE DUTERTE regime's 2017 proposed budget submitted to Congress, the already low health budget is set to be reduced by \$31 billion. From P125 billion this 2016, the reactionary government only allotted P94 billion to public hospitals and other medical facilities and services.

The Health Alliance for Democracy (HEAD) reports that up to 72 government hospitals will suffer budget cuts in their Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses. This covers expenses for medicine, maintenance of equipment and medical facilities. This is less than half of the previous budget. From P74.4 billion last 2016, the health budget will be reduced to P38 billion by 2017.

The insufficient budget for public hospitals has long resulted in expensive prices of services,

medicines, hospitalization, laboratory and others. This will worsen if reduced further.

Worse, from P7 billion this year, barangay Health Stations (BHS) will receive zero funds under the 2017 health budget. The DOH has failed to recognize the importance of providing basic healthcare services at the grassroots level, said HEAD's Dr. Joseph Carabeo.

These budget cuts are products of the neoliberal policies of privatization and corporatization of health services.

HEAD also slammed DOH's latest contrived health program, "All for Health, Health for All," in which P143 billion is said to be allocated. According to Dr. Carabeo, this is no different from the previous Aquino regime's program. The health budget will amount to only P2.50 per capita.

"The tagline 'Health for all' will remain an illusion as long as policies remain profit-centered and serve only to increase the wealth of a few," declared HEAD. **AB**



CORRECTION

In *Ang Bayan's* last issue, it was erroneously stated that one of those murdered in the Lianga massacre was Bobby Tejero. The correct name should be Datu Juvello Sinzo, a Lumad leader, along with Emerito Samarca and Dionel Campos. Paramilitary group member Bobby Tejero is the main suspect in the massacre, together with his brother Loloy and one Garito Layno.

Our apologies.—AB Editors

Police dismantle NAMANA barricade

POLICE DISMANTLED BARRICADES put up by protesting workers from the Nakashin Davao International last September 15 after a local court declared their strike illegal. The court likewise ruled that the dispute between Nakashin workers and its management is a civil case, not a labor dispute. Workers here staged a strike last April after the company forced them to sign a blank waiver and resign for P1,000.

The Kilusang Mayo Uno-Southern Mindanao Region (KMU-SMR) and the Nagkahiusang Mamumuo sa Nakashin (NAMANA) condemned the police action. The dispute is not within the ambit of the local courts, they say, as the NAMANA is a registered union, and therefore, it is up to Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and its agencies to resolve the issue.

Meanwhile, private guards attempted to disperse the picket of workers from the Manila Cordage Company (MCC) and Manco Synthetic Inc. (MSI) in front of their factory in Carmelray Industrial Park 1 in Calamba, Laguna last September 17. The guards, who come from three different agencies, were paid by the MCC and MSI management to cause trouble and dismantle the workers' picket line.

Despite being pelted with rocks and held at gunpoint, the workers remained steadfast. By afternoon on that same day, negotiations were held among the two unions, representatives of the KMU, DOLE and Carmelray, and the private guards and the police. MCC and MSI workers have been on strike for four months. AB

More than 150 million people launch strike in India

More than 150 to 180 million Indian workers launched a general strike last September 2 to protest against Prime Minister Narendra Modi's neoliberal economic policies.

Organized by ten trade union centers, the said strike is considered the largest in humankind's history. Independent national federations of workers and employees from the government also took part in the protest. Since 1991, Indian workers have been fighting the neoliberal policy regime in the country. This is the 17th strike since then.

Modi is pushing for increased foreign investments and privatization of several state-run industries, including defence, railway, banking and insurance, retail and pharmaceuticals.

The All-India Bank Employees Association protested against the privatization and mergers of government banks. Employees likewise criticized the allocation of the people's savings as bad loans to big capitalists.

Workers also opposed the Modi government's proposed policies of allowing companies with up to 300 employees to re-trench, lay off workers and close shop. Meanwhile, companies with under 40 workers are exempted from up to 14 labor laws. Other proposed labor law amendments allow for "hire and fire", putting up obstacles in forming labor unions, and diluting existing social security available to workers.

According to the workers, these policies will result in wage

cuts and loss of employment. Modi's government attempted to dampen the planned strike and offered concessions, but these were met by workers with demands to increase the minimum wage from the daily Rs160-Rs423 towards Rs18,000 (approximately Php12,800) monthly.

Protests were intense in more than 10 states of India, including Gujarat, Modi's home state. Even in the primary state of Delhi, around 20,000 nurses picketed hospitals. Among those who joined the 24-hour strike were millions of workers and employees from the public transportation sector, banking and insurance, as well as those from mining, ports, steel and textile factories, energy plants, and telecommunications. Millions of doctors and nurses also took part, as well as workers in agriculture and from the defence industry, employees from the information technology sector, education, and others.

The workers reiterated their 12-point agenda which they first demanded in 2015. Among these are the stop to price increases, creation of jobs and upholding workers' welfare, monthly pension of not less than Rs3,000 (Php2,147), consultations with workers on their concerns, and an end to contractualization and privatization. AB