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EDITORIAL

Shattering the AFP's illusions

If one were to believe the daily drivel of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), the New People's Army (NPA) has long been decimated. Thousands have supposedly "surrendered" and "returned to the folds of the law." It claims that guerrilla fronts have been crushed and the rest of the NPA units are paralyzed. It proclaims that the NPA no longer has people's support because towns and villages have declared it "persona non grata." It boasts that people now enjoy a comfortable life because basic services are now being delivered into "NPA lairs." It brags about development projects and eradicating hunger and poverty. These purportedly portray the victory of Oplan Kapanatagan, which is an extension of Oplan Kapayapaan and patterned after the "whole-of-nation" US counterinsurgency doctrine.

All these are illusions fabricated by Rodrigo Duterte and the AFP. They lie about the number of "surrenderees" that has surpassed their estimated number of Red fighters. Most of them are peasants and minorities forced to raise their hands after being deceived or coerced by soldiers operating in their villages. Not even a percent of those paraded are true Red fighters who

were captured or who surrendered. By claiming such a big number of "surrenderees", Duterte and the AFP are inadvertently proving how the NPA enjoys the deep and wide support of the people in the countryside.

The social services and development projects bragged about by the AFP is a bigger illusion. Where are these services much needed by

AFP sustains 20 casualties in NPA offensives

NINE ELEMENTS OF the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) were killed while 11 others were wounded in various military offensives conducted by the New People's Army in Masbate, Quezon and Bukidnon from October 8 to 19.

Units of the NPA-Masbate simultaneously attacked dispersed elements of the 2nd IB at Sitio Poro, Barangay Talisay, San Fernando, Masbate on October 12. Two soldiers were killed while six others were wounded.

"Peace and development" teams of the 2nd IB have long been sowing terror in the barangays of San Fernando. They disrupt the livelihood of residents. Three civilians were also brutally killed in Barangay Liong and Buenavista.

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the people? Where are the irrigation systems, the drying facilities for *palay* and corn, and other projects beneficial to millions of peasants and minorities? What they offer are substandard housing units for peasants who, after "surrendering," are coerced to leave their villages. A television set was donated to residents of Lianga in Surigao. A day or two of medical and dental mission, free haircuts, and other gimmickry are conducted by the reactionary government while abandoning public health and other social services. Such programs have long been carried out by local governments but these are now being taken over by the AFP.

The oppressed masses, especially in the countryside, have no illusion about these lies. From their perspective, there is nothing new in the AFP. They are still the armed goons who camp in the middle of their villages and intimidate people. It is the same battalions scouring

the mountains and farms in "clearing operations" and disrupting the people's livelihood. They are the same soldiers who set up a network of detachments to guard large energy projects, commercial plantations and construction companies. Their large combat operations, supported by artillery, aerial bombing and strafing, are the reason why people have left their communities.

Duterte continues to build up the number of troops and weapons of the AFP and its paramilitary in order to intensify its war of suppression. Duterte brags about creating 10 more battalions and one new division, as well as the Brigade Combat Team established in line with US plan. AFP units are also mounting numerous sustained and focused military operations wasting the people's money. In Mindanao alone, the AFP Eastern Mindanao Command reported launching 128,000 small and big military operations in four regions from June

2017 to August 2018. To sustain these operations, the AFP asks for bigger and bigger budget allocation. The AFP and PNP is Duterte's priority in the budget.

To satiate the greed of his corrupt generals, Duterte is shamelessly begging from the US for arms, funds and other matériel for the "modernization" program of the AFP. He is also approaching Russia and China pretending to look for alternatives but only with the aim of making the US "insecure" about its alliance with the Philippines in order to "force" it to pour in more funds and brand-new weapons.

Duterte is hallucinating that his AFP can crush the NPA. This will not happen because the AFP is weak and rotten to the core. It is a puppet army that was established, funded and armed by the US. It is ridiculous that its adviser in counterinsurgency matters is the US, a country which has failed to crush even a guerrilla force in more than half a century of wars of intervention around the world (from Vietnam to Afghanistan).

The AFP's nature, direction and structure is aligned with the interests and needs of the US. It is an army used by the US to suppress the aspirations of the people for national liberation and strengthen US domination in the country. The US establishes and trains AFP units such as the 1st Light Reaction Regiment, two Brigade Combat Teams and other units (Aviation Regiment, Artillery Regiment and others) for its "counterterrorism" and "counterinsurgency" campaign and in order to absorb its second-hand air vehicles and artillery.

The AFP is riddled with corruption, anomalies and intense internal contradictions. The AFP is divided among rival reactionary factions. Its generals scramble funds, resources and privileges to fund their luxurious lifestyle and vices. They race to

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pocket funds at all levels of the bureaucracy—from pension funds of retired soldiers to salaries of CAFGU forces. They are involved, if not themselves lead, the biggest and most violent criminal syndicates.

The AFP does not have the Filipino people's support. Moreover, it is detested by the people. The people have long suffered from its brutalities. They cannot forget the grave abuses under the US-Marcos dictatorship and fascist crimes perpetrated in the past three decades. They know how Duterte is surpassing this violence. The AFP, and no other, is the real persona non grata in peasant and minority communities and villages.

While the regime is bolstering the AFP and unleashing its units in the countryside, its list of rights abuses continue to grow longer. The more troops, the worse crime and abuses. They are merely stoking the people's anger and pushing them to further support and help the people's army. The toiling masses and

intellectuals continue to join the NPA in numbers because of intense persecution, suppression and threats. Duterte is now the number one recruiter of the NPA in the countryside.

The Party continues to expand and strengthen the NPA across the country. Despite large and all-out AFP offensives, the NPA continues to persevere and preserve its strength. It can never be crushed by the enemy because it has deep and wide support of the masses and because it is adept at employing guerrilla tactics.

The illusions woven by Duterte and the AFP will soon be shattered. As the AFP's war against the people continues and escalates, the more intense the people's aspirations become to end the fascist brutalities of the Duterte regime. However brutal the AFP's oppression is, it cannot stop the people's anger from exploding nor will it prevent the advancement of the armed struggle across the country. AB

"AFP...," from page 1

On October 17, a unit of the NPA-Quezon blasted patrolling troops of the 85th IB at Sitio Catulin, Barangay Suha, Catanauan, Quezon. At least six soldiers were killed in the offensive. Another soldier was killed in an NPA sniping operation in Barangay Abuabo Mauban

on October 8.

In Bukidnon, operating troops of the 401st IBde sustained five casualties after being blasted by Red fighters at Sitio Mahan-aw, Barangay Bulonay, Impasug-ong. The NPA-Bukidnon launched the attack on October 19 at 10 a.m. AB

PAKED launches fourth edition of MKLRP

THE FOURTH EDITION of the Short Course on the Society and Revolution (MKLRP) was launched last September 23. MKLRP is a basic education course published by the Party through the National Education Department (PAKED). This edition added a section about the regime of Benigno Aquino III. Several discussions about post-Marcos regimes were also polished.

The PAKED is calling on all revolutionary forces to further intensify MKLRP discussions and use this as a weapon to rouse, organize and mobilize the masses in the countryside and urban centers.

Get your copy of the latest edition of the MKLRP at www.cpp.ph.

Fake news conceal military infighting

THE MILITARY AND police are desperately concealing intense infighting and demoralization among their ranks by peddling fake news. In Kalinga, Abra and Ifugao, such news were used as a veil to conceal several gunfights between soldiers, CAFGU, and police elements.

On August 15, two CAFGU elements were killed after being shot by 24th IB soldiers inside their camp at Sitio Mong-ol, Barangay Maguyepyep, Sallapadan, Abra. The incident was caused by a scuffle over a golden *kuhol* (snail) dish. To save face, 24th IB officials ordered to fabricate a fake encounter and make it appear that their troopers were attacked by the New People's Army (NPA).

Col. Henry Doyaoen of the 503rd IBde also peddled fake news after a misencounter between CAFGU and 50th IB troopers in Kalinga on March 20. The incident took place along the boundary of barangay Buaya and Mabaca in Balbalan where the said units were then conducting their respective operations. A soldier was killed during the misencounter. To save face, the military peddled that there was an encounter between the NPA and AFP, and that they were able to confiscate a rifle.

An CAFGU element was also killed by operating troopers of the 50th IB in Barangay Sakpil, Conner, Apayao. The said CAFGU was shot by soldiers while fetching water outside their camp. On September 29, two police operatives were shot by their fellow police inside the camp of the Regional Mobile Force Battalion in Banaue, Ifugao. AB

Hunger among food producers

Hunger in the Philippines is evaluated as "serious." This was exposed by Welthungerhilfe and Concerned Worldwide in their Global Hunger Index report for 2019. The GHI measures and tracks hunger and malnutrition in nations. The report also said that stunting among children below five years is "alarming," and indicates widespread malnutrition.

It is ironic that hunger is most felt by peasant families who produce the nation's staple food. Up to 70% belonging to this sector are counted among the poorest. Hunger is most widespread in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao where up to 44% go hungry based on conservative estimates by the reactionary government.

The main reason for hunger and food scarcity in the countryside is the measly income of landless peasants and low wages of farm workers. This is even worsened by Republic Act 11203 or the Rice Liberalization Law (Rice Tarification Law), which today is the bane of *palay* (unhusked rice) farmers.

Its enactment in February resulted in the influx of imported rice in the local market. This year, the volume of rice imports is expected to reach approximately 2.3 million metric tons (MT) which is significantly higher than last year's 1.9 million MT. A ton is equivalent to 1,000 kilos.

This resulted in a sharp drop in the farmgate price of *palay*. Several researches indicate that *palay* farmgate prices dropped by more than 21% on average from September 2018 to 2019. Because of this, income of farmers who sell dried *palay* dropped from P29,100/hectare to only P10,500/hectare nationwide. Farmers who sell wet *palay* incur more losses.

Bankrupt farmlands

Data by the Pambansang Katipunan ng mga Magbubukid

(PKM)-Bikol indicate that undried *palay* is bought at only P8.50 in Polangui, one of Albay's top *palay* producers. At this price, farmers lose a lot because they spend at least P51,130/hectare of *palay*. The cost of production includes expenses for production materials (P8,100) and labor (P43,030). If labor is paid wholesale, a farmer needs P48,210. All expenses are shouldered by the farmer.

After three months, an hectare will yield 70 sacks of *palay*, with each sack usually weighing 50 kilos. At P8.50 per kilo in Albay, a farmer gets only P29,750. Subtracting the cost of production to this amount leaves a farmer with no profit and a net loss of P21,380. The farmer is also indebted to the landlord as he is obliged to pay 10% of his net income as land rent.

Palay farmers in Camarines Sur also reap debts. With a total production cost of P49,590, farmers are left with a net income of only P26,250 for 75 sacks of *palay* which are sold at a farmgate price of P7 per kilo. They are short by more

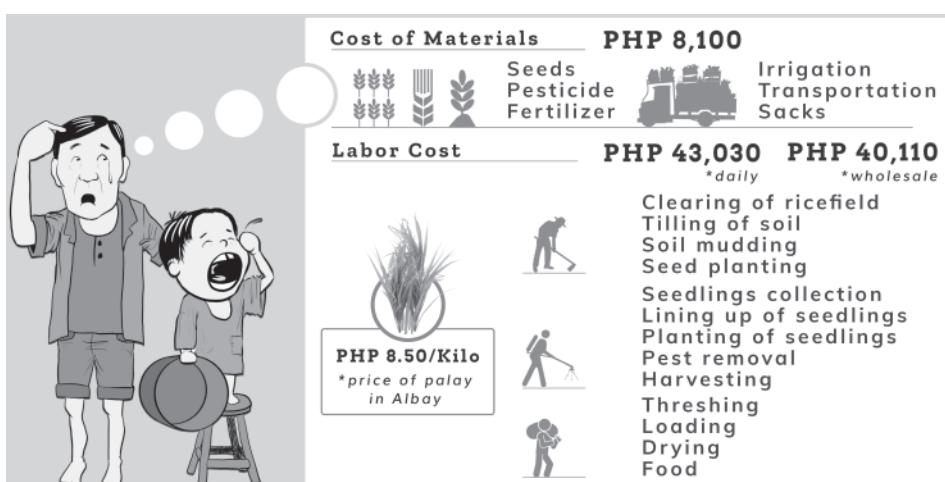
than P23,000 to break even. Consequently, they are compelled to loan from landlords or usurers to fund the next planting season. After incurring losses from *palay* production, farmers are faced with high prices of rice in the local market which amount to P30-P50 per kilo. (In Camarines Sur, the prevailing income sharing scheme is 40-60, in favor of the landlord. The cost of production is shouldered by the landowner.)

Estimates by PKM indicate that P13.80-P14.50 is needed for a kilo of *palay* production in the Philippines. This is higher compared to the P7-budgetary requirement in Vietnam and P11 in Thailand. In these countries, governments provide subsidies for rice production.

Farmers demand the immediate revocation of the RA 11203 and an increase in *palay* farmgate prices. Otherwise, they will further suffer from hunger. Farmers have already incurred at least P60 billion in losses from January to August.

In the long term, agrarian revolution will ensure minimum benefits for farmers, until free land distribution is carried out. Alongside other socio-economic programs, farmers' production become most beneficial in advancing their health and welfare.

AB



Aid, not imports and loans

PROGRESSIVE PEASANT ORGANIZATIONS demanded the US-Duterte regime this October to immediately end rice importation and provide *palay* farmers with necessary aid. They called for revocation of the Rice Liberalization Law or RA 11203 which burdened farmers further. They said that machines and research will be of no use if rice farmers are already dead.

In Metro Manila, a series of mass actions were mounted in conjunction with the World Food Day last October 16. Demonstrations were also held in Cabanatuan City and San Jose City in Central Luzon. Farmers lambasted Sen. Cynthia Villar who is the main proponent of the said law. The Villar family is among those who have long been benefiting from use-conversion of farmlands into housing projects.

In Bicol, farmers organized the regional chapter of the Bantay Bigas alliance. Demonstrations were also held in Legazpi City, Albay. Aside from calling for an increase in *palay* prices, coconut farmers also de-

manded a stop to using fraudulent weighing scales. They likewise condemned the AFP's militarization and violence in farming communities.

Farmers reap benefits

Cordillera farmers reaped several benefits in the form of aid from their arduous struggle in the past months.

Last May, 3,000 farmers in Abra demanded the release of funds by the local government as aid for drought victims. In the town of Malibcong, farmers were able to demand the local government to provide them with 12 hand tractors using the fund from tobacco excise taxes, and 50 cavans of rice from

the town's calamity funds. In the succeeding assembly of representatives of peasant organizations last June, farmers likewise demanded the local government to release rice subsidies from its P4.5-billion calamity fund. Abra is among the provinces most adversely affected by drought in Cordillera, wherein 70,000-80,000 hectares of lowland and upland farms were devastated. AB



Wyeth-Nestlé workers mount picket

Wyeth-Nestlé workers mounted their picket last October 14 in front of the company in Cabuyao, Laguna. They were dismayed over the result of the collective bargaining agreement (CBA) between the management and officials of the Wyeth Philippines Progressive Workers Union (WPPU).

The union argued that the wage increase being offered by the company is way too low in contrast to the P17-billion profit rakes in annually. On top of additional benefits, workers also demanded the regularization of 300 contractuals and the reinstatement of workers who were illegally dismissed by the company. Wyeth-Nestlé is a multinational corporation which manufactures food and milk products for infants.

The WPPU condemned the refusal of the management to regularize workers. It said that the decision was made in accordance to the company's Factory 2020 program which aims to raise more profit through contractualization and suppressing the workers' union in

the factory.

On October 16, another strike was staged by workers of Regent, a food manufacturing company. The workers mounted their picket in front of the factories in Kalawaan, Pasig and Tipas, Taguig City.

Workers complained about the prevalence of contractualization in the company. They said that majority of its employees have been working in the company for 20 years but remain contractuals. Wages are extremely low. The management also refused to implement the CBA and recognize the new union officers. The company is also suppressing the said officials to silence them and dismantle their union. AB

NKTI workers gain victories

THE ASSOCIATION OF health workers at the National Kidney and Transplant Institute announced the victories it gained from its collective negotiating agreement (CNA) with the hospital management.

The workers were able to assert the provision of benefits including a mutual benefit allowance (P5,000 per employee), free meals, free hospitalization for surgeries, and other health benefits, and an additional fund for retirees (P70,000).

The NIKTI specializes in treating kidney complications. Although state-owned, it is profit-oriented as operation is corporatized. The NIKTI Employees Association is a member of the Alliance of Health Workers. AB

Militarization and mining, double disaster in Tampakan

An incessant military campaign has again escalated along the borders of South Cotabato, Davao del Sur, Sultan Kudarat and North Cotabato this year. The focused military campaigns were mounted in the said area by fascist forces of the 39th IB, 27th IB and 73rd IB under the 1002nd IBde of the AFP, and the Special Action Force and Regional Public Safety Battalion of the Philippine National Police Region 11 and 12 to pave the way for the resumption of operations of the Tampakan copper-gold project.

At least 12 military operations have been carried out by the AFP in the area since October 2018. Three of which were battalion operations, seven brigade operations and two division operations. These have been mounted since June. Two new military detachments were also put up to augment 54 existing detachments encircling the area.

Mining equipment and machineries were delivered to the mining site amid military operations. In November 2018, the Australian contractor Major Drilling Corporation (MDC) started its drilling activities in the area.

Destructive mining

Amid these military operations, several maneuvers were carried out by the company to dismantle remaining legal hindrances to its operations. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department of Agrarian Reform, and the pro-mining local government of Tampakan facilitated the reclassification of lands already distributed to beneficiaries under Certificates of Ancestral Domain Title and Certificates of Land Ownership Award. This sparked a rift between Lumads and settlers. The mining company also filed a court petition challenging the legality of the Local Environment Code of

South Cotabato which prohibits open-pit mining arguing that local laws cannot supersede national laws such as the Mining Act of 1995.

The people's arduous armed resistance compelled the mining company to stall its operation in 2014. The broad anti-mining campaign also compelled the multinational Glencore-Xstrata to divest in 2016. Eventually, the local government issued a resolution banning open-pit mining. The US-Duterte regime, however, favored the resumption of mining operations and allowed the operation of companies owned by bourgeois compradors including Henry Sy, Jr. (SM Investment Corp.), David Consunji (SODACO), Manuel Pangilinan (Philex), Tomas Alcantara (SMI/Alsons Investmant), and Lucio Tan, Jr. (MRC Allied).

Australian multinational Indophil Resources NL, the largest stakeholder in the Tampakan project, currently operates in the area. Indophil was founded by former managers of the Western Mining Corporation (WMC). It owns a 40% stake in the Sagittarius Mines Inc. (SMI). San Miguel Corporation (SMC) and the Alcantara Group are among its major stockholders.

The Tampakan mine is a \$5.9-



billion project and has the largest reserve of gold and copper in Southeast Asia. The Xstrata-SMI reported that the mine has a total 2.4 billion tons of mineral deposits, 13.5 million tons of which are copper deposits and 15.8 million ounces of gold. It has the potential to yield an average of 375,000 tons of copper and 360,000 ounces of gold annually for 17 years.

Unwavering resistance

The reopening of the mine was met with staunch resistance by Lumads and the people of Southern Mindanao. In Kiblawan, Davao del Sur, B'laan residents burned down a drilling machine of the MDC early this year. In a mining forum held on September 13 at the Notre Dame of Marbel University in Koronadal City, Bishop Cerilo Casicas of the Diocese of Marbel vehemently denounced the open-pit mining and demanded a stop to the mining operations.

Anti-mining advocates are wary that the resumption of the project and the continuing martial law in Mindanao will result in intense human rights violations, reminiscent of the Capion massacre and the killing of Datu Anting Freay and activist Boy Billanes. The said victims were all murdered by the reactionary state for their stand against the Tampakan mining project.

How did the Alcantara family accumulate its wealth?

The Alcantara family has a big investment in the Tampakan Copper-Gold Project. This is only one of the businesses of the Alsons Consolidated Resources Incorporated (ACR or Alcantara Group), a consortium with diverse interests across Mindanao. They Alcantara group also owns a large share in the Australian company Indophil Resources NL. They also have businesses in industries including aquaculture, agriculture, construction, energy and logging.

The tycoon Alcantara family based in Davao City is close to and a supporter of Rodrigo Duterte. Tomas Alcantara, president of the Alcantara Group, is the 33rd richest Filipino with a net worth of \$300 million (P15 billion).

The Alcantara family migrated to Mindanao in the 1950s. Through the reactionary government's resettlement program, Conrado Alcantara, the family's patriarch, was able to grab lands and open logging concessions in Sarangani (formerly a part of South Cotabato) and General Santos (formerly the district of Buayan and Dadiangas). The family's properties expanded when after grabbing the ancestral lands of Moros and B'laans. Conrado also grabbed a ranch in Alabel and a logging concession in Davao del Norte.

The family's wealth rapidly increased and his businesses expanded in Davao and other parts of

Mindanao. In 1962, the family established Alsons Development and Investment Corporation, the first real estate developer in Davao City.

They were able to accumulate more capital by establishing the Iligan Cement Corporation in 1968. They benefitted from the cement-manufacturing machineries exported by Japan to the country as indemnification for the damages it dealt during World War 2.

Conrado Alcantara was a close friend and a crony of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos. Through favors given him by the Malacañang, Iligan Cement expanded further during the 1980s amid an economic crisis and a tight competition among cement-manufacturing companies. Iligan Cement became the Alsons Cement Corporation which is currently a partner of Ramon Ang's Holcim Philippines.

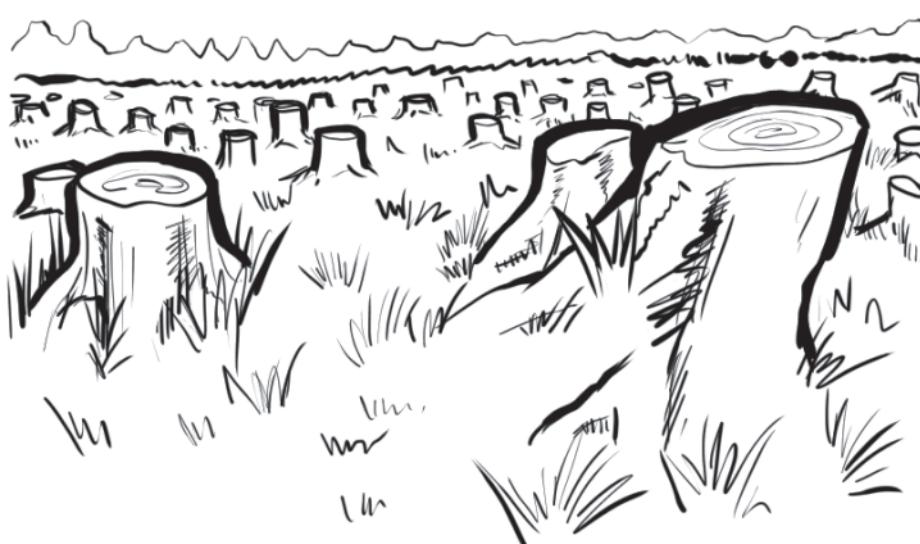
Marcos also gave Alsons a Timber License Agreement (TLA) which allowed it conduct its logging operations in thousands of hectares land in Davao del Norte. The company exports timber to China, US and other European countries. After the dictator was overthrown in 1986 and was replaced by Corazon Aquino, Paul Dominguez (son-in-law of Conrado Alcantara) rose to power and became an influential cabinet member.

Alsons TLA expired in 1989 but was only replaced with an Integrated Forest Management Agreement (IFMA) by the Aquino regime. It was awarded an approximately 45,000-hectare concession area which covered almost the whole of Talaingod and covered 19,000 hectares of Ata-Manobo ancestral lands. The Ata-Manobos fought against Alsons' landgrabbing.

Using the IFMA and after acquiring a P350-million loan from the Asian Development Bank, Alsons was able to diversify in the mining and agribusiness industry.

The Alcantara family also invested in the aquaculture industry in the 1980s. The Alsons Aquaculture Corporation is the biggest exporter of fresh milkfish and other milkfish products. Its products are exported to the US, Canada, Australia, UK, Japan, Singapore, Hongkong and Micronesia.

The Alcantara Group was able to rapidly diversify in the power industry using the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of the reactionary government. It currently owns seven power plants in various parts of the country which are operated by its subsidiaries. AB



Violence, Duterte's gift to teachers

Violence. This was the US-Duterte's regime's gift to teachers and their students. This Teachers' Month, two teachers fell victim to killing attempts, while four others were illegally arrested.

In Bukidnon, state agents shot couple Zhaydee and Ramil Cabañalez, in front of students at Dalit Elementary School in Barangay Lumbayan, Valencia, last October 15 in the morning. Cabañalez sustained two gunshot wounds on her chest and feet, and remains in critical condition. Her husband and students managed to escape unharmed.

The two are members of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT). Since last year, the group has been tagged by the Armed Forces of the Philippines as a communist front because of its campaign for salary increase and benefits.

On October 10, elements of the 402nd IBde and police illegally arrested two teachers and members of members of the Rural Missionary of the Philippines (RMP) in Barangay Limaha, Butuan City. The victims were identified as Melissa Comiso, head of the RMP's literacy and numeracy program for

Lumads, and Nore Torregosa, a volunteer teacher. The two were accused of NPA membership and were slapped with fabricated charges of illegal possession of firearms and explosives.

In Sultan Kudarat, elements of the 37th IB and police arrested Gina Ciano, a volunteer teacher of the Center for Lumad Advocacy Networking Services in Sangay Village, Kalamansig on October 14. She was accused of being an NPA official who was purportedly the third "most-wanted" criminal in the province. She was slapped with multiple fabricated charges of murder and frustrated murder. On the same day, intelligence agents arrested Digna Mateo, coordinator of ACT in Bulacan, in front of the Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Marilao, Bulacan. A week earlier, Mateo reported that she was tailed by riding-in-tandem men after campaigning for a union of ACT-Central Luzon. **AB**



FRUSTRATED MURDER

Zhaydee Cabañalez



ILLEGAL ARREST

Melissa Comiso



ILLEGAL ARREST

Digna Mateo



ILLEGAL ARREST

Gina Ciano

Closure of 55 Lumad schools hit

THE SAVE OUR Schools Network (SOS), students and teachers condemned the decision issued by the Department of Education (DepEd)-Region 11 ordering the closure of 55 Lumad schools in Davao. The SOS asserted that the accusations of Hermogenes Esperon, vice chairperson of the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict, that the schools were used for NPA recruitment is baseless.

In a protest last October 11 at the Freedom Park, Davao City, they called the DepEd fact-finding a fraud as its personnel have not even visited the said schools.

Salugpongán was founded by Talaingod Manobo leaders in 2003 and was accredited by DepEd in 2007. It provides free education to Lumads and supports the struggle to defend their ancestral lands in the Pantaron Range.

Violence in Leyte

A MEMBER OF the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines was gunned down by suspected armed state agents last October 16 in MacArthur, Leyte. The victim was identified as Maureen Japzon, a writer of Bulatlat and official of the Comelec in the said town. She authored various articles which exposed cases of extrajudicial killings perpetrated by the AFP in Eastern Visayas under the command of Jovito Palparan.

On the same day, Renee Superior, councilor of Barangay Libungao, Kananga, was killed in the same town. **AB**

Metro Manila transportation crisis reflects rotten economic system

Over the past few weeks, public attention has been focused on the massive traffic problem that plagues millions of commuters in Metro Manila. This came after the breakdown of rails and public transportation systems, as well as the gridlocks in Metro Manila's main thoroughfares.

The Duterte government has been trying to downplay the magnitude of the crisis and dodging responsibility over its failure to forge solutions to transportation problems by blaming these on former regimes.

By purchasing a luxury jet for the commander-in-chief and other top military officers, the government has further rubbed salt into the people's wounds. Clearly, an efficient mass transport system is necessary to resolve the daily agony being suffered by the people, especially the masses of workers and low-income earners.

The people's demand for immediate solutions and call to end anti-people policies that further burden commuters are just. While demanding a solution, the people must also understand that the transportation crisis, at the more fundamental level, is a reflection of the rotten social and economic system in the country, and can only be resolved strategically through a radical change of that system through revolutionary struggle.

Metro Manila is in a state of decay and disarray

Metro Manila residents suffer not only from traffic, but also from floods, homelessness, waterlessness, lack of sewers and garbage collection, air pollution and congestion, especially those in urban poor communities. Currently, there are approximately 13-15 million residents in the national capital. Manila is considered the world's densest city.

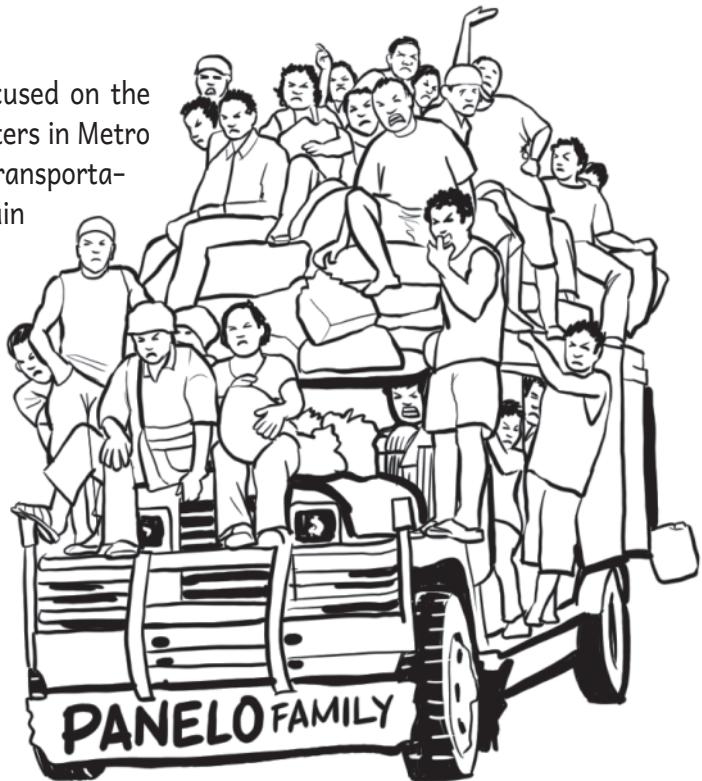
This is a result of the chaotic big

bourgeois real estate speculation (malls, high-rise offices and condominiums), corruption-laden government contracts for public works by whoever bureaucrat capitalist is in power and profit-driven privatization of public utilities, and dumping of surplus cars from Japan and the US. There is no national-level economic planning to achieve balanced industrial and agricultural development and ensure the spread of economic activity.

Residents from rural areas migrate to the national capital in large numbers because of the stark imbalance between urban and rural areas. Presently, the country's main manufacturing and commercial activities are concentrated in Metro Manila and to a certain degree to outlying provinces. Employment opportunities are also concentrated in these areas.

The large army of unemployed people in Metro Manila is advantageous to big business who uses the oversupply of idle labor to press down wages. Thus, the past reactionary governments have largely ignored the problem of overpopulation of Metro Manila and its concomitant social problems.

Over the past 30 years, traffic problem in Metro Manila has been short-sightedly addressed by one public transportation infrastructure



project or another, which soon after reaches overcapacity, requiring another project, and still another.

First, it was the flyovers in EDSA, then the MRT along EDSA, then LRT2 along Aurora. Now, there is a flurry of proposals to solve the daily traffic gridlocks: a subway, a skyway and walkway at EDSA and a North-South ring to bypass Metro Manila.

The contracts for these projects were awarded to bourgeois compradors favored by the regime. All these, including the construction of light railways to Bulacan and Cavite, are projects driven by profit, marked by corruption and burdensome terms of loan payments. These may help ease traffic temporarily. In the long-run, however, these will also contribute to the further congestion of Metro Manila.

Upon the victory of the national democratic revolution, the problems of urban decay and overcongestion will be decisively addressed. There will be a plan to achieve balanced growth of industry and agriculture. There will be jobs available all over

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Turkey invades Northeastern Syria anew

Intense armed conflict has again escalated in northeastern Syria (called Rojava) after being invaded by the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) on October 9. In the name of "Operation Peace Spring," a so-called counter-terrorism military campaign, the TAF indiscriminately bombed towns situated along the boundary of Turkey and Syria which are currently governed by the Kurdish Democratic Union Party. This resulted in the forcible evacuation of around 300,000 Kurdish residents.

The offensives aim to decimate the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which serves as the official defense force of Rojava. The SDF is militarily led by the People's Protection Unit (known as YPG), a self-defense force of the Kurdish people. The Kurds established the autonomous government of Rojava in 2012 as a base territory in their struggle for establishing a Kurdish state in the region along the borders of Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq where majority of residents are Kurds.

Turkey is insisting that the SDF is a "terrorist" organization as it is purportedly allied with the Kurdistan Workers' Party or PKK. The PKK has long been struggling for the establishment of a Kurdish state. Erdogan plans to expel 3.6 million Syrian refugees living in Turkey and resettle them in the towns of Rojava. Among the refugees are millions of Syrians who were evicted from the country due to the five-year war created and incited by the US. To actualize this, Erdogan has to evict, if not eliminate, the Kurds in Rojava to grab their territories. Turkey is launching the attacks together with the Free Syrian Army,

a militia formed, armed and funded by the US against Syrian Pres. Bashar al-Assad. According to Erdogan, Turkey has already controlled up to 1,220 square-kilometers in the said territory.

The Kurdish people's defense force has a relatively weaker fire-power and fewer troops compared to that of Turkey.

To counter Turkish attacks, the SDF was compelled to enter into an alliance with the al-Assad regime recently. The regime was considered an enemy of the SDF for perpetrating several invasion attempts in Rojava territories since 2012. On October 14, Syria and its ally, Russia, started to deploy troops in the region.

US scheme

In 2015, the US entered into an alliance with the Kurds in the name of combatting ISIS. As part of the alliance agreement, 1,000 US troops were deployed in Rojava. However, the real strategic interest of the US was to overthrow the al-Assad regime in Syria.

In 2017, Russia declared that the ISIS have already been "de-

feated" after its bases were pulverized in Iraq and Syria. As a result, US presence in Rojava was rendered pointless. By December 2018, Trump announced that he will pull-out 1,000 US troops from Rojava. This was considered by some as the US' admission of defeat in its attempt to dominate Syria. Last October 6, after negotiating with Erdogan, Trump finally pulled-out the remaining US troops in Rojava.

Trump's supposed abandonment of its Kurdish "allies" was met with vehement and widespread condemnation. To save face, the US made a public spectacle wherein it purportedly imposed several economic sanctions against Turkey. However, these sanctions were immediately revoked by Trump on October 17 in exchange for a 120-hour ceasefire. Turkey used the said period to facilitate the withdrawal of Kurdish troops from fortifications along the boundary of the two countries.

On the succeeding days, agreements between US and Turkey, Turkey and Russia, and Russia and Syria on how the Kurdish territory will be subdivided were exposed. It seems that both US and Russia are amenable to the Turkish invasion of Kurdish territories situated along its southern border. The remaining part of Rojava and the whole of northern Syria that was occupied by the ISIS will again be under the

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the country which will encourage population dissipation of congested cities. Surplus rural labor will be absorbed by industries spread throughout the country. Workers wages and peasant income will be raised.

Only under the people's demo-

cratic government and through economic planning can we achieve well-distributed economic growth, and concomitantly, a balanced distribution of the population. The people's democratic government will pay attention to developing mass public

conveyances (railways for both in-city and long-distance travel). Only through such planning can Metro Manila and other cities be decongested, and the grave traffic problems and other problems of urban decay be resolved.

March against climate change

The social movement against policies and companies that destroy the environment and cause climate change is gaining ground globally. Since 2018, protests have been mounted every Friday under the campaign #FridaysForFuture. The participation of children and the youth, especially students, in these protests is notable.

The biggest protests, participated in by approximately six million youth across the globe through various forms of mobilizations, were launched on September 20-27 this year. More than one million marched in Italy. Mobilizations were also mounted in New Zealand, the Netherlands and Spain. Citizens from Indonesia, South Korea, Taiwan and others also stood up against climate change. The protests were a response to the call of Greta Thunberg, a 16-year-old student from Sweden, to mount a united protest against her government in 2018.

The Extinction Rebellion, a non-violent campaign for civil disobedience, was launched in the United Kingdom on October 7. Consequently, 1,500 rallyists were arrested in London, 92 of whom were slapped with various criminal charges. Similar protests were also conducted in other countries.

In the Philippines, 600 youth and students of UP Diliman

marched last September 20. They mounted an earth-shaped formation to symbolize that the youth will inherit the planet's destruction. The march was spearheaded by the Youth Advocates for Climate Action Philippines, Agham Youth and the Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment.

What is climate change?

Climate change refers to changes in the climate system due to the rise in the temperature of the earth's atmosphere. Among its manifestations are the accelerating sea level rise, frequent and extreme changes in the weather pattern, warm temperature and heavy rains. It also takes the form of typhoons, landslides, floods and drought among others.

These changes affect plants, animals and especially human beings. The natural habitat of animals are engulfed by fire or destroyed.

Based on the Global Climate Index, 526,000 people have been killed by more than 11,500 extreme weather events from 1998 to 2017. These resulted in the destruction of farmlands, produce and properties worth \$3.4 trillion.

Philippines has been listed as the fifth most vulnerable country to climate change. It has been hit by 307 extreme weather events in the same period, majority of which are strong typhoons. This resulted in the destruction of properties worth \$3 billion. Worst among these are typhoon Yolanda (international name: Haiyan, 2013), Pablo (Bopha, 2012) and Ondoy (Ketsana, 2009). Due to its backward economy, the people are reliant on food and other resources that are vulnerable to natural disasters.

A report by the Climate Accountability Institute this October identified the top 20 companies that contribute significantly to climate change. Majority of these are multinational energy companies which emit greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide and methane). The top companies include Chevron, ExxonMobil and Shell. Also among the list are state-owned Saudi Aramco and PetroChina. In sum, these companies have emitted 480 billion tons of greenhouse gases (35% of the total global emission) since 1965.

The Union of Concerned Scientists exposed that the US is historically the top contributor of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere (17%). It has only been overtaken by China in 2011. In 2016, the US and China were listed as the most environment-destructive countries together with India, Russia, Japan and Germany.



AB

Ecuadorian people oppose neoliberal package

TENS OF THOUSANDS of Ecuadorians mounted a general strike from October 3-13 in the country's capital, Quito, to manifest their opposition to the "Pacquetazo Package" a series of neoliberal reforms implemented by the regime of Pres. Lenin Moreno. This was implemented in exchange for a \$4.2-billion loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) last February.

Among the conditions imposed by the loan agreement were significant cuts in social spending, massive retrenchments of government employees and the elimination of subsidies. These resulted in a drastic worsening of the economic and political crisis in the country.

Starkest among these reforms was the elimination of the \$1.3-billion gasoline and diesel subsidy. This doubled the prices of the said

products and resulted in a drastic increase in the prices of all basic goods. Additional taxes imposed by Moreno further burdened ordinary citizens.

To attract foreign investments, he cut corporate taxes and tariffs on agricultural and industrial products. Moreno also lowered the wages of workers and denied them their basic labor rights including the compensation of dismissed workers.

These reforms aim to crush the

capacity of Ecuador to stand on its own two feet and bind it under the semicolonial dominion of US imperialism.

In conjunction with the general strike, Moreno suspended the right to organize, assemble and demonstrate for 60 days to suppress the struggle of the Ecuadorian people. He employed the military and police to violently disperse the protests. At least eight civilians were killed, 800 were arrested and thousands were wounded.

Due to the people's strong resistance, Moreno was compelled to temporarily suspend the policies imposed by the IMF on October 14. **AB**

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government of al-Assad. With these agreements, nothing will be left for the Kurdish people.

Coveted resources

Turkey, Syria and imperialist countries are interested in Rojava because of its rich oil reserves, water resources and fertile land. Before declaring its autonomy, Rojava provided almost two-thirds of Syria's total oil extraction (251,000 out of 387,000 barrels/day). After

its separation, it was able to produce an average 15,000 barrels/araw which was used for power generation in the region, and served as its main export to Syria.

The Euphrates river which is the largest and one of the most important rivers in Western Asia passes through it. It serves as the main source of drinking water and provides irrigation to farmlands in Rojava. There are also major dams and reservoirs in the region which

can be used to generate electricity. At present, water is twice as expensive as oil in Rojava due to limited supply.

Rojava also has a agricultural potential. Before its declaration of autonomy, it served as Syria's food basket. It produced 43% of Syria's grains such as wheat and rice which are the the staple food in the country. It also produced 80% of its cotton which is used in its textile industry. **AB**

