



EDITORIAL

Impending widespread crackdown on pretext of "anti-terrorism"

Towards the end of December 2020, Rodrigo Duterte's Anti-Terrorism Council (ATC) announced it has formally "designated" the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the New People's Army (NPA) as "terrorist organizations." This designation was made in line with the Anti-Terrorism Law (ATL) which Duterte railroaded in July 2020.

The ATC's "designation" against the CPP and NPA is malicious and baseless. The CPP and NPA are revolutionary organizations that wage a struggle for national liberation. The Filipino people's armed resistance has long been recognized by local and international institutions, organizations and governments as a legitimate struggle against foreign and local oppression.

Revolutionary armed forces strictly adhere to internal regulations and international humanitarian laws that protect the interests and welfare of civilians. The Party

and NPA firmly oppose terrorist violence against unarmed people.

The ATC issued the designation even as more than 30 complaints before the Supreme Court questioning the ATL remain unresolved. Legal experts also question why the Party and NPA are charged with "terrorism" when they are "rebels" and not "terrorists" because of their aim of overthrowing the ruling government and replacing it with a democratic people's government.

While wrongly designated under the ATL, the Party and the NPA are not the main targets of the meas-

ure. As both organizations have long been illegal and outside the scope of the reactionary government, the CPP and NPA do not have any legal standing that can be affected by the misdesignation.

The real targets of the misdesignation of the CPP and NPA are the legal and non-armed national democratic forces and the broad ranks of progressive and patriotic organizations, party-lists, unions, human rights defenders, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and individuals who are actively opposing the tyranny. Duterte's top officials admitted that this decision will have implications against groups accused of being "fronts" of the CPP and NPA. The past months, they have relentlessly red-tagged these organizations.

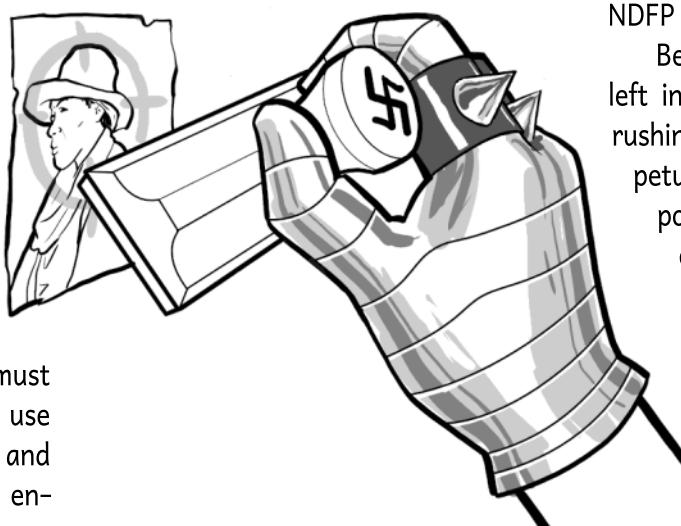
In line with this, the government has ordered the "freezing of CPP and NPA bank accounts," which will affect, not the CPP (which does not have bank accounts that the government can freeze), but the organizations and individuals being accused of "funneling funds to the NPA" by the government.

It is likely that in the coming weeks and months, the Duterte government will use this measure to outrightly illegalize and clampdown against democratic organizations. In misdesignating the CPP and NPA as "terrorists," anyone accused of having links, supporting, sympathizing or giving them protection can be charged and punished under the ATL. Duterte will use "anti-terrorism" to justify the repression of democracy and silence all those who oppose his tyranny.

All democratic forces must firmly act and oppose Duterte's use of the ATL to suppress legal and democratic rights. The Party en-

courages all forces, including those who have nothing to do with the CPP or are even opposed to the CPP and NPA, to stand against the use of the ATL to misdesignate the CPP and NPA as this will have implications on everyone's legal and democratic rights.

The National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) has called on the friends of the Filipino people to raise their voices against the ATL. According to the NDFP, the said law is making it more impossible to hold peace negotiations as a means of resolving the roots of



the armed conflict in the Philippines.

It also called on peoples and governments of the United States, European Union, New Zealand, Australia and the United Kingdom to stand against the misdesignation of the CPP. It asserted that the removal of the CPP and NPA from the "terror list" of the US and other foreign governments will help the Filipino people's resistance against attempts to establish a fascist dictatorship behind the veil of "anti-terrorism" and will help create conditions for resuming the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations.

Because he has only 500 days left in Malacañang, Duterte is now rushing with his schemes to perpetuate the Duterte dynasty in power. Among these are plans to openly impose a fascist dictatorship, push "charter change" for federalism and secure the elections for her equally ambitious, fascist and power-hungry daughter Sara to inherit his throne.

The US-Duterte regime's campaign of suppression is ever intensifying. Before the end of 2020, nine leaders of the minority Tumandok people in Panay were murdered in cold-blood by fascist police in early morning raids in their villages last December 30. It is not far-fetched that this is a prelude to a "Jakarta style" bloody anti-communist suppression that Duterte has long wanted to carry out.

In the face of growing fascist threats against democratic rights, the New People's Army must act firmly and mount tactical offensives especially against abusive military and police units. Armed partisan units must be formed to carry out tactical offensives outside the guerrilla zones against the enemy's military facilities and communication and transportation lines and against key officials and personnel who are involved or have master-minded fascist crimes against the masses.

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Ang Bayan welcomes contributions in the form of articles and news items. Readers are encouraged to send feedback and recommendations for improving our newspaper.



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On the CPP's 52nd anniversary:

#DiPagagapi: Further strengthen the Party!

Revolutionary forces held simple yet joyous celebrations in various guerrilla fronts and communities to celebrate the 52nd anniversary of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) on December 26, 2020. Amid intense military operations and occupation, the masses strove to attend the activities, celebrate the victories achieved by the Party and revolutionary movement, and glean lessons from their experiences during the said year.

Based on initial reports, assemblies and celebrations were held in the guerrilla of the Ilocos-Cordillera Region, Southern Tagalog, Southern Mindanao Region (SMR) and North Eastern Mindanao Region. In SMR, a Basic Party Course graduation ceremony was simultaneously held with the anniversary celebration in a camp of the New People's Army (NPA).

North Central Mindanao. Revolutionary forces faced and overcame the enemy's brutal attacks in the region. The Party effectively preserved its strength and is now in the position to achieve greater victories in the next year. In 2020, the NPA was able to mount 92 military actions in the region against the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and paramilitaries who serve as mercenaries of big mining companies and plantations. The reactionary military sustained at least 154 casualties, with 88 killed soldiers.

Revolutionary forces were also able to launch successful mass campaigns in the region including confronting landlords, filing of complaints at government agencies, and work stoppage. Through these, they were able to increase the wages of farmworkers and demand their benefits. They were also able raise the farmgate prices of their produce. The masses also valiantly faced the fascism of the AFP in their communities. The regional Party committee paid tribute to 18 Red fighters who were killed in AFP bombing operations, and nine killed in armed encounters.



Northeastern Mindanao. The revolutionary movement in the region withstood intense challenges in waging the people's war in 2020. In the face of the regime's all out attacks, the NPA was able to seize military initiative. Red fighters were able to confiscate weapons that is capable of arming a new platoon. They were also able to mount 98 military actions against operating military troopers, and dealt casualties equivalent to a small company.

Panay. The regional Party committee's statement highlights a significant increase in the mass membership of revolutionary organizations in the island. Revolutionary forces spearheaded campaigns for agrarian reform including demanding the peasant masses' right to cultivate idle parcels of land, maintaining peace and order, and in advancing various movements for the masses' class interests. AB

Comprehensive advancement in Negros

THE REGIONAL PARTY Committee in Negros reported that the revolutionary movement in the island comprehensively advanced ideologically, politically and organizationally in the face of the Duterte regime's attacks and the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the field of ideology, Party branches conducted formal discussions on the regional summing up of the Party's 25-year experience. Three-level Party courses were also successfully launched. In Central Negros, 200 Party members completed the Basic and Intermediate Party Course in 2020. Regional party cadres were also able to study the Advanced Party Course. The education campaign was conducted in line with the resolutions of the first education conference in the region which was held early last year.

In the field of organization, mass organizations were able to hold assemblies and meetings and elect their new officers. New chapters of peasant, women and youth organizations were established. Mass membership increased by 10%-15% and its hundred thousand mass base increased by 5%-10%.

In the field of politics, farmers were mobilized in agrarian revolution campaigns, and in antifeudal and antifascist struggles. Revolutionary forces conducted mass distribution of leaflets to educate the masses about the Covid-19 pandemic. Mass clinics were also conducted, the biggest of which served at least 2,000 individuals in Central Negros. For the whole of 2020, the AFP incurred 75 casualties in more than 30 tactical offensives and punitive operations mounted by the NPA in the island.

State forces massacre Anti-dam minorities

Nine Tumandoks who actively opposed the construction of a dam in their ancestral land were massacred, and 17 others were arbitrarily arrested by elements of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) and 12th IB on December 30, 2020 in villages along the boundary of Tapaz, Capiz and Calinog, Iloilo.

The massacre victims were identified as Roy Giganto, Mario Aguirre and Reynaldo Katipunan of Barangay Lahug; Maurito Diaz, Sr. of Barangay Tacayan; Eliseo Gayas, Jr. of Barangay Aglinab; Artilito Katipunan of Barangay Acuña; Jomar Vidal of Barangay Daan Sur; and Dalson Catamin and Rolando Diaz ng Barangay Nayawan, all in Tapaz town.

The victims were known minority leaders and members of Tumanduk, an organization of 17 Tumandok communities in Panay. Witnesses said that the fascists forcibly entered the houses of the victims in the early morning, ordered their relatives to get out, and then gunned them down. Some were slain while they were sleeping. Gayas was also tortured before being killed.

More than 300 fascists carried out operations in 10 barangays in Tapaz, and 200 in six barangays in Calinog.

After the crime, CIDG Region 6 commander Lt. Col. Gervacio Balmaceda maliciously presented the victims as members of the New People's Army (NPA) and were killed after "fighting back." Various firearms and explosives were planted by the operatives in the victims' houses.

Out of terror, around 500 individuals from the said barrios evacuated to various evacuation centers in Tapaz and Calinog.

The military has long been linking Tumanduk to the Party and the NPA. The harassment aims to suppress the minorities' struggle



against the ongoing construction of the Jalaur Megadam in Calinog and the plan to construct the Panay River Basin Integrated Development Project in Tapaz and Jamin-dan. The said projects are set to displace tens of thousands of minorities, and inundate their lands. Tumandoks are also resisting the 3rd ID's landgrabbing of their more than 33,310-hectare ancestral land which is being used as a military reservation. **AB**

Successful barricade in Lupang Ramos

Peasants of Lupang Ramos in Dasmariñas City, Cavite together with their supporters mounted a people's barricade and successfully foiled the National Grid Corporation of the Philippines' (NGCP) plan to evict residents from their land. The two-day barricade started on December 21, 2020.

The NGCP targets to construct electric posts in 372 hectares of land of the farmers. The said agency has been attempting to encroach the area since 2014 but has been repulsed due to the strong campaign against it by KASAMA-LR.

Peasant activist in Bohol killed in Bohol

STATE FORCES GUNNED down farmer Lorenzo Paña in Barangay Dorol, Balilihan, Bohol on December 30, 2020. Paña was a member and former officer of the Hugpong sa Mag-uuma Dapit sa Kasap-dan-Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas. He has long been subjected to harassment by the state for being an activist. In 2018, the police illegally ransacked his home without a warrant in Barangay Bantilao, Antequera. The police also harassed his family.

Torture. Operating 62nd IB troopers tortured and mauled civilians Michael Callao and Jimmy Bayog, residents of Sitio Agogolo, Barangay Macagahay, Moises Padilla, Negros Occidental. The victims were chanced upon and held by the soldiers at Sitio Bongao, Barangay Trinidad, Guihulngan City, Negros Oriental on December 26, 2020.

Strafing. Three civilians were indiscriminately strafed by elements of the 78th IB at a house in Barangay Quezon, General MacArthur, Eastern Samar on November 12, 2020. The victims were identified as Benan, 50, Boboy, 40, at Ryan Cadello, 22. They were accused by the military of involvement in the armed movement.

Militarization. Since December 25, 2020, around 90-120 soldiers of the 11th IB and 705th Police Regional Mobile Force Battalion laid siege 14 sitios in the barangays of Tayak, Napacao and Casalaan in Siaton, Negros Oriental. The troopers perpetrated ten cases of human rights violations including cases of killing, frustrated murder, robbery, destruction of properties, interrogation and intimidation.

Budget for corruption and fascism

RODRIGO DUTERTE HAS finally signed on December 28, 2020 the ₱4.5 trillion national budget for 2021 which its critics call a budget for corruption and fascism.

Almost a fourth of the budget (₱1.1 trillion) was allocated to infrastructure projects, while less than 4% (₱200 billion) was allocated to pandemic response, raising the capacity of health system, and the procurement of vaccines.

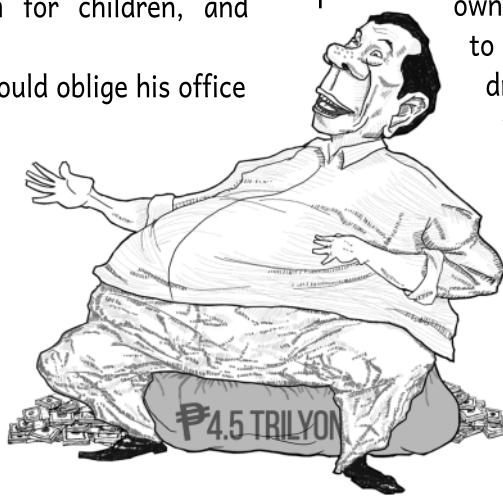
A huge chunk of funds was allocated to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (₱38 billion) program and intelligence and confidential operations (₱9.5 billion). Although there were talks of jacking the ₱19.1 billion budget of the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict, it retained its budget in the final version of the national budget.

On the other hand, Duterte vetoed the provisions on the allocation of budget to procure additional beds for public hospitals; grant teachers with transportation and learning aid allowance; relocation of residents to be displaced by infrastructure projects; feeding program for children, and other basic services.

He also vetoed the provision which would oblige his office to submit a quarterly report to Congress on how his office spent its intelligence funds.

Meanwhile, Duterte appropriated ₱560 bilyon to pay the debts which he accumulated in the past months. Philippine public debt has already reached ₱10.2 trillion as of November 2020.

AB



CAFGU troop surrenders firearms to NPA

AN OFFICER OF the 46th IB was gunned down by a CAFGU element who could no longer bear his abuses in Barangay Bugho, Pinabacdao, Samar last September. Earlier, he refused to go on patrol in fear of being blasted by the NPA. He was mauled by his commander, prompting him to shoot the officer. He surrendered the R4 rifle and pistol issued to him by the military to the NPA and sought refuge with the people's army. After two weeks, the 46th IB withdrew fully from the villages they occupied in Pelaon, Magdawat and Manaing in the same town.

In Negros Oriental, a lieutenant and another soldier of the 11th IB were killed, while two others were wounded in an armed encounter with an NPA unit in Siaton town on December 24, 2020. Two Red fighters were also martyred during the gun battle.

Measly funds for vaccination

DESPITE RODRIGO DUTERTE'S repeated declaration that only a vaccine will save the country from the pandemic, he has actually allocated only ₱2.5 billion for its procurement. An additional ₱70 billion will be raised from government loans and tax revenues which are yet to be collected. This week, there have been reports about Duterte's plan to again borrow a total of ₱30 billion from the Asian Development Bank and World Bank to buy vaccines. This is despite the regime's underspending as it has only utilized 8% of the ₱5 billion it borrowed from the World Bank earlier in April to purportedly fight the pandemic.

Due to the lack of a centralized plan and budget, many local government officials were compelled to declare that will just buy their own vaccines which they will distribute to their constituents. Instead of addressing the shortage on its own, it passed on the responsibility of procuring 600,000 doses of AstraZeneca vaccines (United Kingdom) to capitalists, and requested 200,000 doses for its own use. An additional two million doses of vaccines will also be shouldered by the private sector.

NPA-Eastern Samar conducts military training

A PLATOON OF the New People's Army (NPA)-Eastern Samar completed the Basic Politico-Military Course (BPMC) last October 2020 amid intense military operations in the region. Red fighters underwent a 12-day training in an area cover by the Retooled Community Support Program (RCSP) operations of the military.

The training aimed to raise the military skills of the unit in preparation for worse attacks by the Duterte regime's armed forces. Local mass organizations ensured the security in the area as well as other logistical requirements for the activity.

In a simple ceremony held after the training, trainees declared that the training has improved their confidence in warfare and in waging armed struggle against state fascism. After the training, the unit was immediately deployed to face the fascist troopers who were conducting RCSP operations in the area.

AB

Teachers and parents demand:

Safe reopening of schools

The Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) criticized Rodrigo Duterte for reneging on his plan to reopen a limited number of schools for face-to-face classes this January. Teachers said that this is a neglect of his duty to ensure the need for safe, quality and accessible education during the pandemic. The group called this a "passive response" where people are left to choose between life and health, and the right to services such as education. "We are fed up with this tactic," said the group.

ACT pointed out that the state must strive to ensure the safe reopening of schools for face-to-face classes. Teachers consider this as still the most efficient means method of instruction and learning. This demand is becoming more immediate in the face of the implementation of the Department of Education's (DepEd) failed and inefficient blended learning system in the past five months. The program lacked preparations, modules are erroneous, and many are not able to cope with the method of instruction.

DepEd does not explain the importance, risks and need to prepare for the safe reopening of schools. Because of this, many parents thought that schools will be reopened simultaneously in all parts of the country, whether the area is Covid-free or not. They are extremely anxious because of the virus and the cost of hospitalization should they or their children be infected with the virus.

Sandy was among the parents who thought that schools will be reopened simultaneously. "Safety first before education," she said. Others said that schools should only be reopened "when there is already a vaccine" or "maybe next year." However, the possibility of inoculation especially among children is still far from being realized as they are least prioritized by the regime.

Until now, they are locked up in their houses without any plans on how they can return to their normal lives.

There are also a number of parents who are supportive of the plan to reopen schools despite the lack of information about it. Lena who has four children finds the modular learning system difficult. "I was only able to reach Grade 3 and I am in no position to teach them." She worries that her eldest child will not pass Grade 12 as learning without a teacher is extended. No one in their family is a high school graduate.

"Actually, I feel bad," said Joy. "Why have they just planned this out at the end of the year? Why have they made us suffer for five months under this modular system when face-to-face classes were possible?" Joy just gave birth when classes under the blended learning system started in August last year. She is the only one taking care of her five-month old infant and her two other children who are in Grade 2 and Grade 6.

"Mothers are loaded with so much household work. They cook, do the laundry, clean, wash the plates

and find money," said Gina. "I could not concentrate in teaching my children because I'm already tired. They are also lazy to study because they are just at home."

Those who favor face-to-face classes also said that health measures must be observed in schools, such as the wearing of face mask and face shield, maintaining physical distancing, limited hours and days of school days to ensure that classrooms will not be crammed. They understand the risks of face-to-face classes, and pledged to responsibly follow protocols to ensure their children's safety. They are willing to participate in any program that DepEd will suggest as long as they are consulted first. Meanwhile, Fanny said that "My children learn almost nothing from the modules. I make their projects and answer their assignments."

"Why were bystanders allowed to go on drinking sprees, while children are not allowed to study properly?" The regime reopened all other establishments in October, including places for entertainment.

From November to December, many cities and towns have already identified Covid-free barangays. An area is considered Covid-free if it has not recorded any case in the two weeks. Outside Metro Manila, there are many areas with extremely low infection rates. In such areas, the spread is easily controlled with the residents and local councils' close coordination. AB



No 13th month pay for many workers

Many workers anticipated to receive their 13th month pay last December 2020 in order to bounce back this new year. Many also expected that they could use this to pay the debts they incurred after losing their jobs during the lockdown period. New year has already passed and many have not received the said pay.

The 13th month pay is a monetary benefit that employers are obliged to give their employees not later than December 24 of every year. All workers, including contractuals, who rendered at least a month of service to their employers are entitled to this benefit. This is computed based on their basic monthly pay and the number of months they worked for the entire year.

In normal times, Filipino workers often spend this during Christmas or to pay for other household expenses, or set this aside as emergency savings. This pandemic, at a time when most families are in dire need, many workers were denied this benefit. Approximately 2 million workers did not receive their 13th month pay in 2020.

These individuals include Kim, a worker at a large grocery in Manila. "I have been working as a merchandiser for five years now, but I'm only nominally regular. For five years, I have not been given a 13th month pay and other benefits," she said. This past non-working holidays, Kim was obliged by her employer to work without being given a special compensation. This is a violation of reactionary labor laws which states that workers should be payed 200% of their regular pay during holidays.

Lucy, a security guard in a company based in Laguna, also did not receive her 13th month

pay. "Our agency already gave my workmates their 13th month pay, but I have not received mine. I am currently on maternity leave because I just gave birth during the last week of October," she said. After filing a complaint, the management of the security advised her that she has to file a "temporary resignation letter" to get the said benefit. She refused to do so after being warned by her workmates that this will only be used to terminate her employment.

Instead of being given a 13 month pay, Niko and his fellow construction workers in Pampanga were charged with debt interest

payments by their employer last month. He explained how his employer used their cash advance during the lockdown period was used to bury them in debt and deny them this benefit. "Our wages are now in the negative because the cash advance was treated as a loan with interest. Our employer doesn't care and has refused to give us any consideration."

Like in Niko's case, the ₱3,000-cash advance which Jack received last March was deducted from his 13th month pay by his employer. He was planning to use the said money to buy maintenance medicines for his hypertension, but he has only received ₱400. "Our supervisor told me that a large amount was also deducted from my 13th month pay because it was already in September when I was ordered to report back to work."

These cases prove that Labor Sec. Silvestre Bello's declaration that workers must be given their 13th month pay is toothless. In reality, he still has no plans to inspect workplaces to ensure the compliance of employers to the said law.

Businesses, especially hard-up small and medium enterprises, were not given any subsidy to ensure that they will be able to provide their employees with the said benefit.

The absence of 13th month pay for many workers contributes to the continuing decrease in the value of wages amid the pandemic. Globally, the International Labor Organization estimated that workers' wages has already decreased by 11% or equivalent to \$3.5 billion (₱168 trillion) during the first three quarters of 2020. ■



Surviving Covid but not hardships

The year 2020 ended with the Philippines registering 747,000 cases of Covid-19 infections. Last January 4, the total number of recoveries was placed at 448,258 and deaths at 9,257. Most of those who recovered from the infection are under 49. Most of the patients who died were aged 60 and above.

During the pandemic, thousands of infections were declared “recoveries” by the Department of Health (DOH) weekly. This was under the DOH’s “Oplan Recovery” where all asymptomatic cases, as well as mild cases which did not develop further, were declared recovered after the requisite 14-day quarantine. Patients were either quarantined in government facilities or in their own houses. Added to their numbers are those who recovered in hospitals.

Those who have recovered did not undergo testing while in quarantine. This is because most of them would still test positive of the virus which could still be inside their bodies, according to the DoH. According to scientists, the virus is most contagious during the first 10 days of infection. About 90% of all infected, ages 59 below, recover from the disease.

They recover from the virus, but their hardships do not necessarily end there. Many are not able to emerge from the ordeal as they are buried in debt due to skyrocketing hospital bills. Many continue to experience symptoms and have difficulties going back to their old lives. They did not receive any aid, subsidy or support from the state when they were sick, much less when they became survivors.

In Metro Manila, private hospitals charge patients up to ₱30,000 to ₱40,000 a day, excluding payments for doctors’ professional fees. There were patients with mild symptoms who paid ₱570,000 for a 14-day hospital stay. Big hospitals charge up to ₱700,000 for a weeklong stay, even if the patient did not use oxygen or a ventilator.

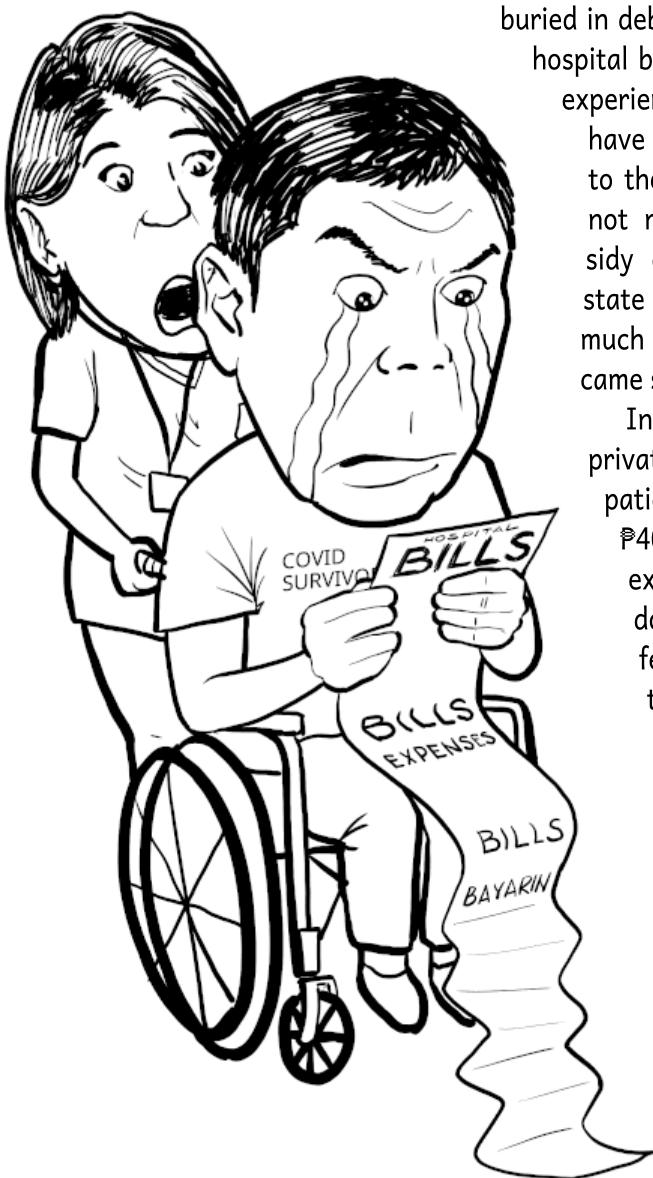
Some symptoms stay with

Covid survivors even after recovering. A number reported periodic fevers, cough, loss of taste and smell and breathing difficulty even weeks after they were declared “recovered.” There is no data on how many of Filipino Covid survivors are affected by this condition, which is called the “long Covid.”

“Sometimes, I still wake up gasping for breath,” Manny said, three months after he left quarantine. He has tested twice and has been in quarantine for two months before testing negative. To aid his recovery, he spent his remaining savings to buy vitamins and other supplements to boost his immunity.

Some survivors were unable to return to work. “I first tested positive and underwent quarantine in September,” Pinang, a worker, said. In December, she was still not able to return to work. Like in many companies, a negative Covid-19 test result was required in her workplace. “I’ve been tested five times and came out positive in each. In the end, she underwent a special test to ascertain if the virus in her body was still contagious. “I’ve yet to start working but I’m already neck-deep in debt,” she said. Each test costs about ₱1,500 to ₱8,000. PhilHealth only covers ₱3,409 and only if the tests are all carried out in a single laboratory or hospital.

“I considered resigning from that job,” Pinang said, “but it’s so difficult to find work elsewhere these days.” She fears that she won’t be able to claim her benefits at a time when she needs it most. The process of claiming benefits from the Social Security System is slow and tedious. “I have workmates who resigned last October. It’s already December but they are yet to receive their sickness benefit,” she added.



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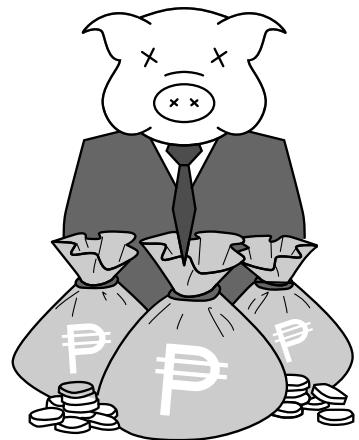
Under Duterte, the Philippines has fallen 18 places in the list of the least corrupt countries in the world

Source: Transparency International

₱350-₱2,450

increase in PhilHealth contribution to be shouldered by workers receiving a monthly salary of ₱10,001-₱69,999

From 95th, the Philippines is now the 133rd least corrupt despite Duterte's pretensions and bogus anti-corruption campaign.



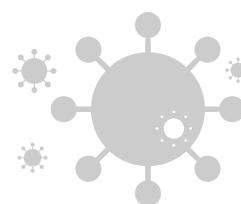
₱700B

lost by the government to corruption and plunder annually.

Source:
Office of the Ombudsman

B.1.1.7

a new variant of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19. It was first detected in the United Kingdom on December 20, 2020. Although there is not sufficient evidence proving that its "more contagious," many countries already closed their borders in an attempt to prevent its spread.



Variant - a known virus that has developed a "specific group of mutations" that causes the variant to behave differently than that of the strain it originated from.

10.3 million

doses of various vaccines have already been distributed to 29 countries. 8.25 billion doses are already purchased or reserved.

Philippines Trends

1 #NoToVIPvaccination

3,032 Tweets

The people criticized the special vaccination of the Presidential Security Group and a member of Rodrigo Duterte's cabinet. They were vaccinated ahead of health workers.



Marco L. Valbuena

@marco_cpp

Jan 3

₱2.77 a day. This is what Duterte gave Filipino teachers as additional allowance under the 2021 budget. Adding insult to the already burdened.

6

290

1.2K

9

Channel of unity and struggle

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic and the militarist lockdown, physical assemblies and mobilizations of democratic organizations in the Philippines were limited in 2020. (*Read related article in Ang Bayan December 21, 2020.*) In this light, various sectoral mass organizations in urban centers strove to use online platforms to arouse, organize, mobilize and study.

Based on initial data collated by *Ang Bayan*, there have been more than 300 online activities last year, mostly by local chapters of mass organizations. These includes online protests, cultural concerts, social media rallies, webinars and political discussions, orientations at chapter building, and meetings. The youth is the most active sector in online activism.

A number of fora and protests were organized by national centers of democratic organizations (there were weekly activities, and others were build-up online activities for upcoming mobilizations).

The biggest online protest was held on May 1, 2020 and spearheaded by Kilusang Mayo Uno in commemoration of the International Labor Day. It was viewed 77,000 times in Facebook. Individuals also simultaneously posted photos to assert the people's right to health and livelihood.

The most popular forms of online actions this year were online fora and short discussions on the enactment of the Anti-Terror Law (ATL). A number of fora and discussions were launched by

local chapters of youth organizations in Metro Manila, Southern Tagalog, Cordillera and several provinces in Visayas and Mindanao.

Social media also served as a venue to gather tens of thousands of signatures against the ATL and to demand the renewal of ABS-CBN's franchise. The call #JunkTerrorLaw also trended several times to oppose the said law, simultaneous with #OustDuterteNow.

Calls against red-tagging also resounded over the internet, as well demands by health and government workers for hazard pay and free mass testing, criticism of the online learning system using the #NoStudentLeftBehind, and support for jeepney drivers using the #BaliikPasada to demand the resumption of jeepney operations.

The potential of social media in mobilizing support when the country was hit by successive typhoons late last year. Calls for donations, and aid spread quickly, as well as the demand to hold the

Duterte regime accountable for its inaction using the #NasaanAng Pangulo (Where is the President?) which trended in November 2020.

Various community and factory-based organizations actively posted their grievances in social media during the lockdown. They criticized the regime for the slow release of funds for its Social Amelioration Program as well as inadequate food aid.

Clusters of workers, urban poor residents and villagefolk also launched online consultations to identify the grievances of the people. This is on top of individual posts by the poor masses, youth and professionals.

The reactionary state met the advance in online protests with repression. Many were harassed and arrested for posting their grievances and criticisms online. AB

Huge potential of social media

A study in October 2020 indicates that around **81 million Filipinos are internet-users**. Filipinos spend the longest hours in the internet compared to other countries in the world, with an **average usage of 10 hours per day**. They spend four hours in social media. Majority of them are aged 20 to 34 years old.

Facebook is accessed by nearly all of the **81 million** Filipino internet-users. More than 40 million are reached by YouTube, 14 million by Instagram, 10 million by Snapchat, and 7.8 million by Twitter.

