

## EDITORIAL

# Persevere in advancing the struggle for wage increases

**I**nflation rose to 7.7% in October (the highest since 2008) in the face of relentless increases in the prices of oil, food, housing, medicine, education and other basic necessities. The people's extreme poverty and hardship are becoming more pervasive as standards of living continue to fall. The suffering of millions has intensified as a result of a series of widespread flooding that destroyed their homes and livelihoods.

The US-Marcos II regime is playing deaf and blind to the grievances of the toiling masses. It refuses to address the demand for urgent measures to lift the large majority of the people from the quagmire of poverty. Instead, Marcos Jr chooses to continue implementing neoliberal policies which for decades have caused the destruction of the local economy and inflicted worse suffering to workers and the entire people.

Marcos Jr continues to implement the policy of cheap labor and other programs to attract foreign capitalist investors as his government's central economic policy. The

people's economic crisis and socioeconomic conditions are set to further worsen amid the peso's continuing devaluation against the dollar, the rapid increase in government debt, corruption and wasteful police and military spending of the people's money.

Ordinary people could no longer afford the ₱1,100 minimum amount required to meet the daily needs of a family of five ("family living wage" or FLW). The ₱570/day minimum wage for workers in the National Capital Region (the highest in the country) is just about half of the FLW. Large numbers of workers re-

*Continued on page 2*

## NPA ambushes soldiers securing Abra mines

THE NEWS PEOPLE'S Army (NPA) ambushed soldiers from the 24th IB in Mount Basiwag, Barangay Gacab, Malibcong, Abra province last October 27. Two troopers were killed while another was wounded.

The ambush is a punishment of the said unit for its fascist attacks and suppression of the people's opposition to extensive mining operations in Abra and Apayao. The soldiers serve as guards of the operations of large mining companies.

Extensive mining operations will encompass the ancestral lands of the indigenous peoples in the towns of Malibcong, Lacub, Tineg, Licuan-Baay, and the borders of Abra in Apayao and Kalinga. It includes some parts of the Gran Cordillera Mountain Range.

Accompanying planned mining operations are focused military operations with the aim of suppressing and breaking the unity of the indigenous people against destructive mining.

"The people will get nothing from large-scale mining and militarization other than intensified grabbing of their ancestral land," according to the NPA-Abra.

Aside from the armed action last October 27, the NPA also reported mounting tactical offensives on June 30, July 9 and August 18 in Abra and Apayao. Five fascist mercenaries were killed in these armed actions.

ceive even less than the minimum.

The livelihood of the majority of the toiling masses can longer keep up. Amid the sharp drop in the people's livelihood, the just clamor of the Filipino working class and people for immediate wage and salary increases resounds even more. At different levels and areas of struggle, workers demand wage increases as an urgent measure to allow their families the keep up with the worsening economic and social crisis.

The struggle for higher wages is the foremost economic struggle of the entire working class. It is especially significant now amid the rapid deterioration of the socioeconomic conditions of the toiling masses and entire people. This must be thoroughly and militantly waged amid the anti-worker US-Marcos II regime's refusal to heed their grievances. Courage and determination to fight is needed more than ever amid the armed suppression of unions and organizations of workers and the toiling masses.

To advance the struggle for wages, the trade union movement must expand and strengthen, carry out various forms of collective action and advance the workers' strike movement. Victories in the struggle for wages, as well as in the fight

against contractualization and improvement of working conditions, depend on the actual strength, capability, broadness, vitality and organization of the trade union movement as a whole, and that of militant unionism in particular.

Due to the relentless attack on unions in the past three decades, the number of unions is now very low (only in 6% of enterprises with at least 20 workers in 2020). It is necessary to generate a widespread movement for organizing unions in the largest and greatest number of workplaces and enterprises. These must be forged as centers of workers' militant action.

In the coming weeks and months, millions of workers must be reached and aroused through a widespread campaign of propaganda and education in factories and communities, as well as offices and schools, to underscore the correctness, justness and urgent need to raise wages and salaries amid the socioeconomic crisis, and expose the rotten and twisted reasoning of Marcos and his officials. Workers and the masses should collectively manifest their grievances through protest actions in factories and streets in various forms and sizes.

The widest range of organized

workers must be brought together to push the reactionary state to address the reasonable demands for general wage increases, a national minimum wage, and abolition of the anti-worker RA 6727 that established "wage regionalization," and RA 6715 (or Herrera Law) that paved the way for labor contractualization.




The country's economy continues to decline due to continued implementation of neoliberal policies which only weakens the local economy and bring greater suffering to workers and the whole people. Capitalists have long imposed policies of wage suppression, slave-like working conditions in factories, and oppression of workers in violation of labor rights. This is demonstrated clearly in labor enclaves where, behind the rhetoric of "development," workers are subjected to the worst forms of exploitation, condemning the country to backward conditions, to the benefit of giant foreign companies.

Amid intensifying economic crisis, the broadest unity of the toiling masses and democratic classes should be built to push the demand for jobs, for the repeal of onerous taxes, for commodity price controls, for respect of housing rights, for a stop to destructive projects, and for expanding social services and other initiatives for the people's well-being.

In the various fields of struggle, the most crucial is widespread workers' action and resistance in factories and in the streets demanding higher wages. It is through this that the working class is able to lead the people's economic struggles.

The struggle for higher wages is not quickly completed. History teaches us the importance of heightening workers and people's protests. Conversely, wages have been kept low and unable to keep up with rising costs, and no longer reflecting the true value of a labor-power because their unions and

*Continued on 3*

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# Unions stage struggles

**F**our unions staged protests and collective actions this week to advance their rights to collective bargaining and demand a fair increase in wages.

In Quezon City, Kowloon House restaurant workers staged a protest action during their lunch-break on November 3. They demanded the company to comply with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) order in May raising minimum wages from ₱537 to ₱570. They also called for a national minimum wage based on the living wage of ₱1,119. They are set

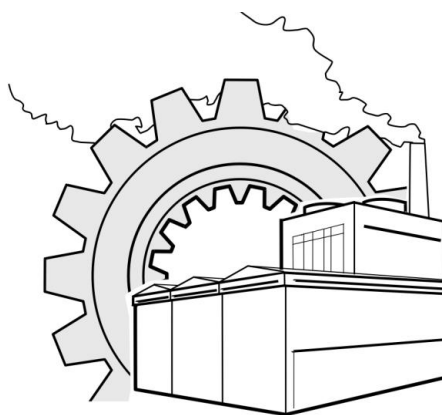
*From page 2*

struggles have been suppressed.

Majority of the current generation of workers have yet to experience widespread strikes and street actions similar to that of the 1980s. They must be urged to study history so they can learn of their intrinsic strength as workers based on their unions and collective action.

This widespread campaign for wage increases should strengthen the fight against fascist repression and the assertion of the right to unionize and express their grievances. The struggle for wages should be strictly linked to the fight against the policy of cheap labor and other oppressive imperialist dictates. Workers must also relate their struggles with the anti-feudal and antifascist struggles in the countryside.

Workers' consciousness should be raised for them to fully grasp the nature of capitalist exploitation behind the issue of low wages, as well as the relationship of the workers' movement to the movement for national freedom and genuine democracy in the country. **AB**



to negotiate their collective bargaining agreement (CBA) before the end of the year.

On the same day, workers of the Technol Eight Workers Union staged a picket in front of the National Conciliation and Mediation Board while their petition for the CBA negotiations to continue was being heard. Negotiations have been held 15 times in the plant but no headway has been achieved. This is because the company refuses to increase wages beyond ₱24/day.

The University Hotel Workers Union (UHWU) announced on the same day that the management and their union have agreed on a new CBA. The union fought decisively for higher wages and extra benefits beyond the previous CBA. As a result of their fight, workers salaries have been increased by ₱7,000 a month since 2005. The UHWU is the union of workers in the University Hotel of the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City.

On October 25, contractual workers of TS Tech Trim Philippines staged a protest in front of the DOLE national office. They called for the agency to release its decision to make them regular workers in the factory. As early as 2018, the DOLE favored the workers demand for TS Tech and the Yashima Sangyo Philippines Inc. management agency to have an agreement for regularization. They also complained against Yashima's violations of labor laws such as forced leave, lack of adequate benefits and incentives, and excessive overtime work. **AB**



**Doctor, not police.** On October 23, health workers protested the appointment of former police chief Camilo Cascolan as Undersecretary of the Department of Health (DOH). They called it out-and-out militarization of health services.

**Abolish the NCIP!** Different organizations of national minorities trooped to the office of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) in Quezon City on October 29 on the 25th year of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act. They demanded the abolition of the agency which is being used by the military and big companies to coerce and drive them away from their ancestral lands.

**FEU Black Friday.** Students of the Far Eastern University wore black as a sign of protest last November 4. This is to assert academic freedom and resist the university's impending plan to expel three students who participated in an activity last September 21 commemorating the dark days of martial law.

**Solidarity with the Palestinian struggle.** Filipinos in Canada joined the international campaign on October 29 for the return of Palestinians and the liberation of Palestine. They staged a protest in Vancouver, along with Palestinian groups and their supporters.

# Protests, collective farming, unity on Peasant Month

Farmers' staged a series of protest actions to mark the Peasant Month last October. They joined the 14th International Day of Rural Women on October 15 and the 43rd World Food Day on October 17, also called "World Hunger Day." On both occasions, they went to the Department of Agriculture (DA) in Quezon City and raised their grievances for land, jobs and subsidies.

On Peasant Day on October 21, they marched to the Mendiola bridge in Manila. The march coincided with marking the 50th anniversary of Presidential Decree (PD) 27, the fake and anti-peasant land reform law of the Marcos dictatorship. This order gave protection to landlords favored by the dictatorship, and buried peasants in crisis and hardships, which they continue to suffer today. Farmers from Southern Tagalog, Central Luzon, Ilocos and Cagayan Valley participated in the action .

A day earlier, more than a hundred peasants from KASAMA-Timog Katagulugan staged successive protest actions before national offices of government agencies for defense, agrarian reform, environment and natural resources and agriculture. They attended a dialogue with DA officials. They raised their demand for Land, Subsidy and Justice! Their leaders drew attention to the case of a farmer and a child who was killed by mercenary soldiers in Batangas behind the veil of fake encounters.

In Visayas, the Hugpong sa mga Mag-uumang Bolanon (Unity of Boholanon Farmers or HUMABOL-KMP) celebrated its 38th anniversary, in conjunction with the 15th congress of the organization on October 21.

On October 23, farmers started to collectively farm the Tartaria land in Barangay Tartaria, Silang, Cavite, led by the Tartaria Farmer's Association. They called for a stop to land grabbing by the Aguinaldo family.

Farmers from the Association of Legitimate Farmers and People of Lupang Ramos (Kasama-LR) celebrated the 4th anniversary of the People's Mass in Lupang Ramos last October 24.



## NPA-Negros mounts sniping, harassment operations

THE NEW PEOPLE'S Army (NPA) units in Negros island mounted a series of tactical offensives over the past two weeks targetting the most notorious military and police units.

The NPA-Central Negros fired at a police station in Sitio Parkingan, Trinidad, Guihulngan City on November 1. Two policemen were reported injured.

On the same day, NPA snipers fired at a military detachment in Barangay Budlasan, Canlaon City. The detachment was also the target of an NPA sniping operations on October 30. A soldier was killed and another was wounded in the offensives.

Meanwhile, five soldiers of the 62nd IB were killed in an encounter with the NPA-Central Negros in Sitio Ilijan Gamay, Barangay Planas, Guihulngan City on October 29 at 3 p.m. Another encounter in Sitio Ilijan, Barangay Buenavista transpired at 9 p.m. where Michael Asuncion (Ka Reymund), a Red fighter, was killed.

On October 20, NPA-Southwest Negros harassed a military detachment in Pinggot, Ilog, Negros Occidental. According to the NPA units, the armed actions are in response to the AFP and PNP's continuing human rights violations on the island.

## Police arrest workers' leader in Quezon City

POLICE ARRESTED AND detained on trumped-up charges Benjamin Cordero, head of the Labor Sector of the Quezon City Development Council, a member of the Samahan ng Manggagawa sa Quezon City (Workers' Association of Quezon City) and campaign officer of the Urban Poor Coordinator Council in the National Capital Region, last October 25, at 11:40 p.m. at his residence in Quezon City. He was falsely charged with murder at the Batasan Police Station 6. Cordero was temporarily released on October 27 after posting bail.

Aside from Cordero, Dabilo Basilio and Amor Reyes Acayen, both members of the Dumagat tribe, were also named in the warrant. Amor Acayen died of illness last August. She is a known leader or elder from Sitio Kanlusong, Barangay Puray, Rodriguez, Rizal.

**Artillery shelling.** The 203rd IBde bombarded Mansalay, Oriental Mindoro on three times last October 18. Bombs exploded near the villages of Waygan and Sta. Terecita causing fear and anxiety among residents. Moreover, soldiers encamped at the barangay hall of Waygan and said they will remain there for at least six months.

**Harassment.** Philippine Army soldiers forcibly entered and ransacked the home of Kinging Turing in Sitio Pandayan, Barangay Tan-Aiwan, Placer, Masbate on October 19. Soldiers stole six sacks of rice that Turing harvested and brought it to their camp. The military justified the act by claiming that the rice was meant for the people's army. Soldiers also took the palay supplies of nine other farmers in the same area.

# South Cotabato residents resist San Miguel Corporations' carbon mining

**S**an Miguel Energy Corporation (SMEC) is currently pursuing its coal mining operations in Barangay Ned, Lake Sebu in the province of South Cotabato. The company is aggressively pushing these operations after more than a decade of being forced to stop by fierce public opposition and a ban on open-pit mining in the area. To secure the mines, the military launched a focused operation in the area while threatening residents who oppose it to ensure the operation continues.

## Daguma coal project

One of the largest coal mines in the country can be found at the borders of South Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, and Sarangani provinces in the Daguma Range. It has a total area of 36,000 hectares and is estimated to have 328 million metric tons of reserves. It covers the ancestral lands of the Lumad T'boli and Dulang-Manobo and the vast forests that is home to the Philippine Eagle and endemic animals and plants. A huge part of the mine covers Ned, an agricultural village with an area of 42,000 hectares and a population of approximately 19,000.

Six companies were given mining concessions in the area by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). However, Daguma Agro Minerals Inc., Sultan Energy Philippines Corp., and Bonanza Energy Resources Inc. were the only companies with approved applications for production and development. In 2010, SMEC bought

these concessions covering an area of 17,000 hectares. SMEC also plans to build its own energy plant (mine-mouth power plant) in the province.

The company then failed to begin operations due to the people's intense opposition. The state mobilized the military in response to the widespread resistance that led to the massacre of eight Lumads on December 3, 2017. In December 2018, the South Cotabato Provincial Council eventually revoked its permission for the mining operations.

Last year, however, the council reversed its earlier decision. As justification, it claimed that mining will solve the natural burning of coal which causes the "burning ground" and the emergence of "tension cracks." People in Ned have long faced the ill-effects of combustion which has caused respiratory health problems, as well as damages to roads and landslides in some communities.

This reversal was met with condemnation for ignoring the greater social and ecological problems that coal mining would cause. Its major direct effect is the dislocation of the Lumads and peasants in the area, environmental destruction, and widespread poverty and hunger.

## Pollution and harm

According to the company, an estimated 180 million metric tons of coal are available at their mine. They will initially mine at least 100 hectares in its first five years of operation.

The SMEC claims it will use "strip mining" and not "open pit" in the project. Although the two techniques are different, both are "surface mining" and it will also cause broad and irreversible damages to the environment and people's livelihood.

SMEC will mine lignite coal or so-called brown coal, the lowest grade of coal. Brown coal, due to its brittleness, is not viable for export. However, its use is widespread in mine-mouth power plants around the world. It is also considered the dirtiest type of coal due to the high carbon dioxide that it emits as result of its high moisture content and low energy density.

Apart from intense air pollution, anti-coal mining groups also fear possible contamination of the waters and the destruction of water channels from the rivers of Kubulnan and Allah. Kubulnan flows to the Liguasan Marsh which is an important source of fish. While the Allah River is the main source of irrigation of the vast agricultural lands in South Cotabato and Sultan Kudarat.

Millions of people in Mindanao will surely suffer from the devas-



*Continued on page 8*

# Cruel military rule in Negros

Successive incidents of bombing, illegal searches and encampment in village centers are some of the severe violations of human rights perpetrated by military forces in Negros over the past weeks.

**Himamaylan City.** Elements of the 94th IB ransacked homes and intimidated residents of Barangay Buenavista. At 4 a.m. on October 27, soldiers forcibly entered the home of spouses Sandro and Racel Salcedo in Sitio Ulo-Tuburan. They were with their 5-year old son. In the same area on October 25, Welson Aniano was illegally detained and subjected to torture by the 94th IB.

Residents of Sitio Lanap and Asaran were also searched and terrorized on October 20. Residents of Sitio Pisok were forced to evacuate. They were threatened with detention if they did not obey the military.

At least 50 families fled to Sitio Cantupa and Tigbao.

**Guihulngan City.** The AFP shelled Mount Cansanda twelve times at the border of Barangay Magsaysay and Balugo on the evening of October 31. The bombs fell near the communities and swidden farms forcing residents to flee their homes in the middle of the night.

The 62nd IB troops strafed the home of the Aliyacyac family in Sitio Pangi, Barangay Magsaysay on October 30. In addition, the military placed the movement of residents of barangays Buenavista, Planas and

Villegas under its control from October 29 to 31 affecting the people's livelihood.

From October 22, combined units of 62nd IB, 33rd DRCoy and Scout Ranger conducted a week-long operation in barangays Basak, Buldo, Binubuhan, Tacpao and Humay-Humay. They forcibly entered farmers' homes, encamped at schools and churches, and summoned members of the 4Ps program. On October 24, 10 soldiers ransacked the homes of Candro Briones and two others in Barangay Bulado.

**Sipalay City.** Soldiers of the 47th IB fired an M203 round against farmer Alfredo Dantes whom they saw in Sitio Looc, Camindangan in October. After that, the soldiers subjected Dantes to interrogation. **AB**

From page 2

tating effects of the mine. The extreme effects of Typhoon Paeng in Maguindanao was just a warning of the more serious destruction that could happen in southern central Mindanao if the remaining forests in Daguma are destroyed.

**Military repression**

To ensure their continued operations, SMEC has strengthened its armed forces to threaten those who oppose the project. It claimed of facing bomb threats against its power plants to seek military protection. Defenders of the company also accuse anti-coal mining groups of being "rebels" or "terrorist" supporters.

In July, the 6th ID-Joint Task Force Central created and activated Task Force Bangis. Areas covered by the mining and surrounding places were identified as its areas of responsibility. Its focus was said to be on defeating the NPA forces operating in the

area. Its declared aim is to end insurgency and "terrorism" to achieve "development."

Residents were shocked that alongside the start of focused military operations of the TF-Bangis, heavy machineries rolled in and the company's operations started abruptly. Many farmers were forced to sell their land for only ₱80,000 per hectare. Hundreds of families were driven away from their homes and promised relocation and assistance.

Amid these, Lumad and settler residents reiterated their demand for an end to mining and for defense of their land and the environment. It received widespread support from the people of South Cotabato and neighboring provinces.

A campaign was mounted by the people to fight SMEC's coal project. On October 5, the Archdiocese of Marbel (Koronadal) and Cotabato joined the people in launching a petition to halt the said mining. **AB**

## CPP mourns death of leader in FSMR

THE COMMUNIST PARTY of the Philippines (CPP) expressed deep sadness over the death of Emmanuel Fernandez (Ka Ampog/Akuy/Brad), a member of the Central Committee and one of the revolutionary leaders in Far South Mindanao. Ka Ampog died on October 30 after years of illness. Medics took his remains to a hut in Barangay Buenaflores, Senator Ninoy Aquino, Sultan Kudarat, to make arrangements with his family.

The local police got wind of the information and made a report. Soldiers of the 603rd IBde were immediately dispatched. In violation of the rules of war, soldiers shot Ka Ampog's corpse. They publicly claimed that he was killed in a battle to get a reward. The CPP strongly condemned this desecration by the 603rd IBde.

Ka Ampog hailed from a small landlord family in Tampakan, South Cotabato. Despite this, he spent almost his entire life serving the toiling masses in the region.

# Heightening militarization in South Quezon-Bondoc Peninsula

The masses of coconut farmers in the towns of the third and fourth district of Quezon daily face military intimidation and violence. They are victims of various types of human rights violations perpetrated behind the veil of the "war against terrorism."

The 85th IB, 59th IB, 201st IBde, 2nd ID under the Southern Luzon Command of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) are conducting all-out focused military operations and Retooled Community Support Program (RCSP). These are combined with the E-CLIP (Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program) which forces people to "surrender" and which tramples on human rights of peasants in Quezon.

According to data gathered, there were 28,292 cases of human rights violations in the province at the end of Duterte's term. Most of these were recorded in February 2021 when the 85th IB dropped bombs towns of San Narciso, Buenavista and Catanauan causing widespread terror among the people.

From July to October this year, the military again shattered the peace and intensified operation in communities it suspect of serving as base of the New People's Army (NPA).

Just last month, brutish and ill-mannered soldiers of the 85th IB entered a resident's home to threaten him for allegedly being a supporter of the people's army. The resident was angry saying soldiers treated him worse than a criminal.

Meanwhile, soldiers pursued at



tried to arrest Julius Lacaba, a coconut farm-worker in Barangay Villa Mendoza, Gumaca, last October 26. Lacaba is being accused of being an NPA commander who brings a grenade to his coconut farm.

## Bullying and coercion

As in other parts of the country, the AFP repeatedly forced civilians in Quezon to surrender. In Barangay Abuyon, San Narciso town, 100 farmers were forced to "surrender" and made to pledge on September 22 in exchange for a small relief pack and some food.

In the town of Lopez, 29 farmers in Barangay Jongo and San Isidro was made to "surrender" for the third time on October 1. Among them were farmers who had previously "surrendered" and had dinner with Rodrigo Duterte in Malacañang in 2018. They were also paraded as "surrenderers" in September 2021, with 66 other farmers. Meanwhile, 105 farmers in Barangay Ilayang Ilog A were forced to join an organization on October 25. Military operations began in these barangays on September 20.

In Barangay San Francisco B, soldiers incessantly went house-to-house to summon peasants. According to initial information, at least 1,030 were made to "surrender" in the said village since 2021.

## Peppered with military camps

Of the 40 military camps across the South Quezon-Bondoc Peninsula, 14 are in the town of Lopez. These camps are fully supported by Mayor Rachel Ubana, an active NTF-Elcac agent. Lopez, in the province's fourth district, can be considered a focal point of human rights violations.

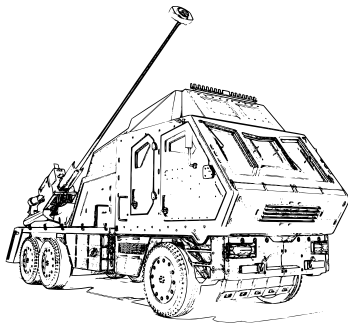
The 85th IB has used its Ugnayan Caravan to cover communities in Quezon. Behind the veil of "providing service," soldiers are like rampaging dogs openly sniffing around farmers villages.

Since August, at least six barangays have been pestered by the Ugnayan Caravan in the towns of Gumaca, Lopez, Catanauan and San Narciso. In 2021, this was found to be one of the reasons for the spread of Covid-19 in Barangay San Jose, Macalelon.

AB

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of **12** newly-delivered **ATMOS 2000** artillery were positioned in Mindanao on October



150



recorded **deaths** on November 3 due to the floods caused by **Severe Tropical Storm Paeng** since October 27.

Most deaths were recorded in **Maguindanao** where more than **60** died in Barangay Kusiong, Datu Odin Sinsuat.

44,000

71

years of the unequal **Mutual Defense Treaty** between the US and the Philippines. Signed on October 1, 1953.

101

members of the CPP, NPA, NDFP and their civilian companions were killed in violation of international humanitarian laws from 2017 up to present.

Download Ang Bayan's full special report "War Crimes of the AFP and PNP, October 29, 2022" on <https://philippinerevolution.nu>

**workers were terminated from work** in US' technology sector this year, in addition to the 90,000 workers removed from newly-established companies



\$8

per month

fee set by **Twitter** for verified accounts (formerly free), as ordered by its new owner billionaire **Elon Musk**.

₱725.265 B

**added to the country's debt in Marcos' first 3 months.** At the end of September, the country's debt reached ₱13.52 trillion.

13.24 millimeters



increase in **Manila Bay's sea level** every year, while Metro Manila sinks 10 centimeters yearly.

300,000



demonstrators in **South Korea** last **October 24** demanded the resignation of President Yoon Suk-yeol.

He was denounced as ineffective, a traitor and anti-peace for supporting war games with the US, Japan and South Korea and provoking war against North Korea.

# AFP's enslavement of "surrendered" Agtas

**M**oana, an indigenous Agta, was a civilian when her own uncle "betrayed" her to the 95th IB in exchange for a ₱2,000 reward. She was declared a "surrenderee" and made to "report" to the military camp along with others. There she experienced abominable treatment together with her fellow Agtas.

"The soldiers treated us like slaves," narrated Moana. They were forced to carry supplies and work in fields. They were deprived of food when unable to work and when provided, receive very little. "Just a handful," she said.

Moana felt gravely sorry for her fellow Agtas especially for a mother with a small child. She kept her meager food ration to give to the baby and other children kept hostage inside the camp.

There is a school inside the camp but rarely is there a soldier "teacher." "When present, the teacher acts very hostile," said Moana. "Children are cursed with bad words." Because of this, children have no interest in attending this "school".

"I often dream of a free life in the forest," she said. But she wakes up in the "housing" provided by the military. "That's what they call the garbage heap covered by a tent where we are made to sleep in."

Agtas are also used as human shields in military operations. "They make us ride a truck every time they operate in Isabela," she said. Agta women are often ordered to go to the market while men are made to serve as guides in combat operations. After these jobs, they are brought back to the camp and kept under strict guard to prevent their escape.

Moana cannot bear the life inside the camp. "A dog's life is better than our life there," she said.

One day, she was ordered to go

the market with her cousin. When soldiers were not looking, they picked up hats and put on clothes and ran away. They jumped into the river to escape the soldiers guarding them. "We almost got caught!" she exclaimed.

In the forest, they met another group of soldiers who were gathering rattan. "Fortunately, their Agta guide pretended not to know us," she said. "I know that he was only forced to act as a guide because the soldiers threatened his family."

After months of hiding, Moana was tracked down by her kin who was a Red fighter. She was placed under the care of an NPA unit in Isabela to protect her from soldiers hunting for her. Having experienced severe exploitation, it is clear to Moana why it is necessary to stand

up and fight against the deceptive program of the reactionary government such as the military's forced surrender program.

While in the unit, she felt the respect of comrades and the freedom that was taken away from her by the fascist soldiers. Soon, Moana expressed her desire to become a full-time member of the people's army.

The forced "surrender" of civilians and their detention and enslavement in military camps is a serious violation of the international rules of war. It is also illegal to force them to get involved in armed operations that endanger their lives in the event of a battle. Double protection should be accorded to women and children in areas of armed conflict.

Moana and Agtas like her are aware of the national oppression and neglect by the reactionary state. They are also aware of the rich history of the revolutionary movement's solidarity with national minorities like them in protecting the environment and the forests that form part of their lives. Compared to other armed groups, only the people's army strives to drive out destructive and plunderous government and foreign businesses' mining and logging projects in the Sierra Madre mountains. This is main reason why minorities easily understand and embrace the people's war.

Ka Moana and many other comrades who come from national minority groups, know that only by participating in the national-democratic revolution will their democratic and just interests be attained.



# The gross conditions of Bukidnon rubber tappers

Leo, a farmer in Bukidnon, estimates that his family needs ₱208 just to get them to eat and survive hunger everyday. Despite being very low (the living wage is pegged at ₱1,119), the ₱69-₱173 he earns per day as a rubber collector in a plantation is still insufficient. It is far from enough to support his three school-age children.

Leo is landless and is compelled to work in a rubber plantation in their area. He is the tapper for a 2-hectare land with 600 trees. He has been working there for over 20 years. Every month, he sells 500 kilos of raw rubber for ₱26 per kilo. Of the ₱13,000 he earns, he is left with only ₱5,200 because of the 60-40 share with the land owner.

Leo's situation is worse during the rainy season because the collected rubber does not thicken when it gets wet and cannot be sold. When this happens, he earns only around half. This means he earns only ₱2,600 per month or ₱86.66 per day.

For the rubber to coagulate, tappers mix it with acid. Leo pays for the additional cost because the landowner does not help defray the production costs.

Leo is just one of the many tappers in Bukidnon who suffer gravely due to landlessness and low price of raw rubber. Traders do not follow the price set by Philippine Rubber Industry Roadmap 2017-2022 for raw rubber which should be bought at least ₱30 from producers. On the other hand, traders sell it at ₱87 per kilo to large rubber manufacturing companies.

Across the Philippines, rubber plantations cover approximately 300,000 hectares of land. Northern

Mindanao ranks fifth in sources of raw rubber, with Zamboanga Peninsula taking the lead. The largest plantation in the region is Pioneer Amaresa with operations in Maramag town. It exports raw rubber mainly to Malaysia.

According to data from the United Nations Comtrade, the Philippines is the eighth biggest exporter of raw rubber in the world. Its main buyers are China and Malaysia, where factories for tires, rubber health products and others are located. Every year, the international demand for manufactured rubber products increase.

Though Leo is a rubber farmer, he cannot afford to buy the products made from it. "It's already hard for me to buy rice. We just eat dried fish or noodles alternately every day. I can ill-afford these things, what more with expensive shoes and tires," Leo said. AB