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Editorial

Scrap the anti-terror bill

The Communist Party of the Philippines and the Filipino people strongly condemn the US-Arroyo regime's barefaced drive to pass into law the anti-terror bill (ATB). This out-and-out fascist measure will use the full viciousness of the state to repress and crush the patriotic, democratic and progressive forces and all others who oppose or

protest against the ruling puppet reactionary regime and system.

The Lower House in a special session last February 19 approved the ATB, which they ironically called the Human Security Act (HSA) of 2007. Arroyo took advantage of her control over the majority in Congress to push for the approval of the ATB which she will use to quell expected mass protests against electoral fraud to be committed by Malacañang in the coming May polls.

The HSA overly expands the definition of terrorism. It violates basic civil rights and the constitution by punishing and imposing restrictions on the rights of suspected terrorists.

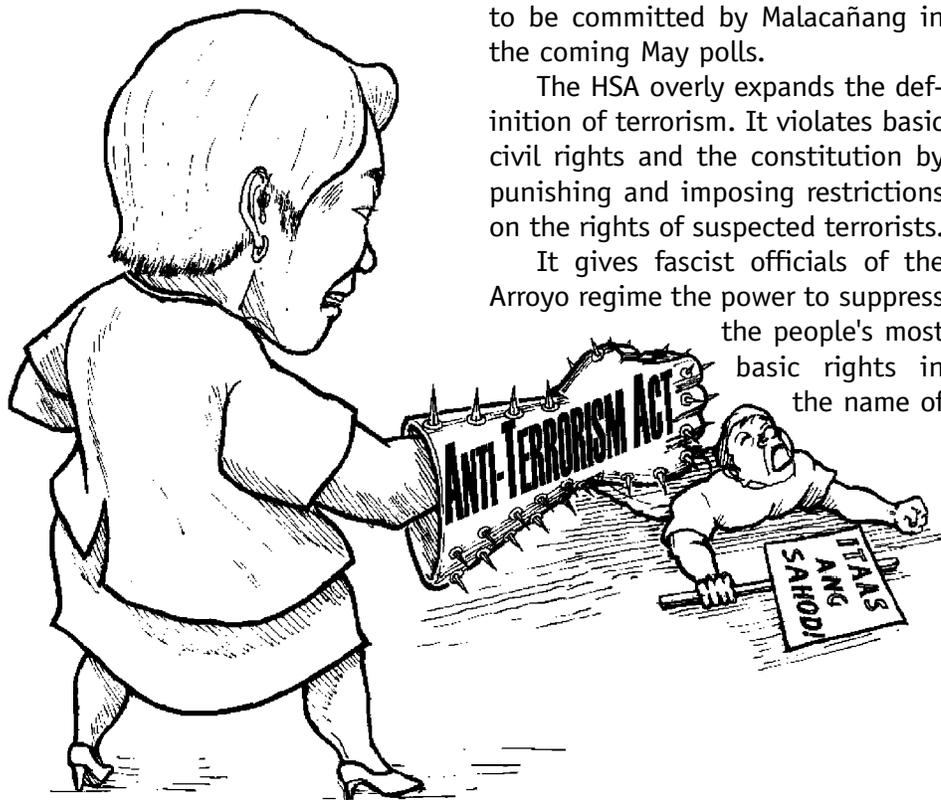
It gives fascist officials of the Arroyo regime the power to suppress the people's most basic rights in the name of

anti-terrorism. It calls for the creation of an Anti-Terrorism Council which will be led by the despotic members of the Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security (CO-CIS). The HSA will provide a cloak of legality to the CO-CIS' orders for even more heinous killings, abductions and torture of activists and other perceived enemies of the regime.

The HSA supplants previous laws and significant constitutional provisions on civil and human rights, due process and the role of the judiciary. More government and military officials, for instance, are given the power to order or recommend the arrest of, and impose repressive measures against, persons accused of terrorism.

The HSA is obviously intended to intimidate the people from freely exercising their rights and airing their grievances. It removes all obstacles to the Arroyo regime's widespread plunder, unrestrained authoritarianism and abject puppetry. Its main targets are the patriotic and progressive forces including those who participate in electoral politics. Even if their representatives are again elected to Congress, the regime will use the new law to slap fabricated charges against them and arrest, detain and suppress them.

With the passage into law of the even more repressive HSA, the Arroyo regime is further subsumed into the Bush regime's global war on



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terror and assured of continuing US imperialist support. Crushing or repressing the democratic, progressive and anti-imperialist forces also guarantees the implementation of even more oppressive and exploitative economic policies that will allow imperialists to plunder the country's natural wealth and prey on peasants, workers and the middle classes.

A reign of fascist terror looms with the HSA's passage. Expect heightened viciousness against legal activists, more cases of warrantless arrests, intensified and systematic suppression of rallies and mass protests, and arbitrary searches and other forms of civil rights abuses. There will be more killings and abductions under

the so-called war on terror. In fact, the HSA will provide legal justification for more intense, more widespread and more overt state terrorism.

It is the pressing duty of the democratic and revolutionary movement to exert all means to oppose and defeat the HSA and the spread of state terrorism. The HSA's passage must be opposed with widespread and all-out people's protests. Concurrently, the NPA will intensify and expand guerrilla warfare as its contribution to the people's valiant struggle to oust and punish the worst fascist masterminds and implementors of political killings, largescale terrorism and other heinous human rights violations. AB

The repressive Human Security Act of 2007

1. Greatly expanded definition of terrorism. The HSA considers as terrorism common crimes whose purpose is to incite and create widespread fear among the people to force government to accede to an unlawful demand. Section 17 states that the Department of Justice can declare as terrorist in any regional court any organization performing "acts of terrorism."

Anyone convicted of terrorism can be sentenced to life imprisonment. Accomplices will also be sentenced to life imprisonment. Accessories to the crime will be sen-

tenced to not less than 17 years imprisonment.

2. Treatment of suspects as criminals. The HSA denies the rights guaranteed by the 1987 Constitution by allowing the warrantless arrest and indefinite detention of anyone suspected of terrorism. A suspect may be put under house arrest if there is insufficient evidence against him.

Warrantless arrest and indefinite detention. Under Section 18, suspects and members of terrorist organizations can be arrested with-



out warrant and detained for up to three days without charges. The PNP will only need a written order from the Anti-Terrorism Council to arrest a suspect, a clear violation of the constitutional provision stating that only the courts have the power to order arrests and detention. Under Section 19, any government official can extend beyond three days the detention of a suspect in times of actual or impending terrorist attack.

Restrictions on travel and communications. Under Section 26, a suspect may post bail but his freedom to travel can be restricted to his municipality or city. He can also be subjected to house arrest and prohibited from using telephones, computers or the internet or any other means of communicating with

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Philippine human rights situation tragic—UN rapporteur

United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions Philip Alston is due to announce on February 21 his preliminary investigative report on the widespread and systematic killings of Philippine activists and their supporters. He spent ten days meeting and discussing with various groups in the country—including high-ranking government and military officials of the Arroyo regime, representatives of Karapatan and the victims' relatives.

Alston said his meetings with the victims' relatives and Karapatan were fruitful, and declared that he had sufficient information to write a report and make recommendations to the United Nations Hu-

man Rights Council. He scoffed at Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez's claim that he had been brainwashed by leftist congressmen and human rights organizations.

Alston met with government officials on the first day of his visit to the Philippines. Among them were members of the Arroyo cabinet, Human Rights Commission officials and high ranking PNP and AFP officers. He also met with Supreme Court representatives.

It was only towards the latter part of his investigation that Alston had the opportunity to talk

with the victims' relatives and human rights organizations. He met with them in Metro Manila, Baguio and Davao City.

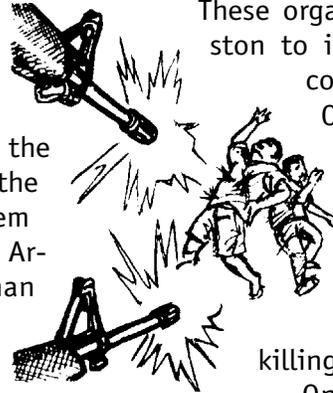
In Baguio City, Hustisya, the Cordillera Peoples Alliance and the Cordillera Human Rights Alliance presented Alston with documentary evidence on 20 cases of killings of national minorities since 2001. These organizations requested Alston to investigate the regime's conduct of the antipeople Oplan Bantay Laya. The Commission on Human Rights (CHR) in the Cordillera confirmed that some soldiers and policemen were involved in the killings.

On February 18, thirty families from various Mindanao regions gathered in Davao City to testify before Alston. Karapatan-Southern Mindanao submitted material and documentary evidence related to 20 cases of human rights violations.

Alston decried what he called the tragic human rights situation in the country and said he was deeply disturbed while listening to the narratives of the victims' families.

Concealing the Melo Commission report. Despite the Arroyo regime's pronouncements that it had nothing to do with the political killings, it saw fit to conceal from the people the Melo Commission report. Arroyo is worried that the report could expose her regime's coverup of the crimes, her direct responsibility for them and the involvement of her high-ranking military officers.

The UN Commission on Human Rights and the European Union were among those the regime wished to deny copies of the report. Bishop Oscar Cruz and Bishop



"HSA..." from page 2

others outside his residence. The constitution prohibits holding anyone incommunicado.

Surveillance and spying. Under Section 7, individuals and organizations suspected of terrorism and their accomplices can be subjected to surveillance. When authorized by a court, government agencies can listen in, block or record all communications, messages, conversations, discussions and correspondence between members of suspected terrorist organizations, associations and groups as well as individual suspects.

Confiscation of funds and property. After permission by the Court of Appeals, government agencies may open and look into all the bank accounts, deposits and records of any terrorist suspect, suspected terrorist organization and their individual members. Under Section 39, the courts may confiscate, sequester or seize bank deposits and other financial assets of any suspect.

3. Establishment of the Anti-Terrorism Council. Under Section 53, an Anti-Terrorism Council (ATC) will be established to implement this law. The ATC will be composed of the Executive Secretary, the Secretaries of Justice, Defense, Foreign Affairs, Interior and Local Government, and Finance and the National Security Adviser. The National Intelligence Coordinating Agency will serve as ATC secretariat. AB



Antonio Ledesma of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) called for the publication of the report. Public outcry has since forced Malacañang to belatedly publicize the report.

More victims, mounting condemnation. Led by Papal Nuncio Fernando Filoni, 15 representatives from various European Union nations and Canada arrived in the Philippines last February 21 to investigate the worsening human rights situation in the country and look into the Melo Report. They were invited by Gloria Arroyo who was desperate to prettify her regime. Archbishop Filoni's group was met by high-ranking government and AFP officials who promised to provide them with copies of the Melo Commission report and other important documents. But instead of discussing the cases of political killings in the country, the AFP ranted about alleged links between the legal mass movement and the Communist Party of the Philippines and the NPA. They made it appear that political killings in the country are justified.

Meanwhile, the Public Services International (PSI), an international federation of labor unions, condemned the political killings in the country. The PSI compared the Philippines to Colombia in the number and severity of human rights abuses. **AB**

UN investigates human rights abuses against national minorities

United Nations special rapporteur for national minorities Prof. Rodolfo Stavenhagen arrived in the Philippines last February 21 to investigate new cases of political violence and killings perpetrated against national minorities.

Stavenhagen last visited the Philippines in 2002. In December 2002, he submitted a report detailing the strong protest of national minority communities against eviction and the expropriation of natural wealth from their ancestral lands. He also condemned the direct role played by the state's agents in violations of human rights and the growing number of killings and abductions of the regime's enemies.

Based on his report, the United Nations Human Rights Commission on Indigenous Issues in 2003 made recommendations to ensure respect for the human rights of national minorities and other abused sectors. To this day, however, Congress has yet to pass a law on the recommendations despite the numerous bills on the issue filed by congressional representatives from Bayan Muna, Anakpawis and Gabriela. **AB**

Bayan Muna official slain in Misamis Oriental

Four people were killed by the state's armed thugs, according to *Ang Bayan's* latest tally of human rights violations. The victims include a 74-year old Bayan Muna official in Misamis Oriental who was killed last February 8. The killing happened despite the presence of United Nations representatives investigating the Philippines human rights situation.

February 15. A death squad of the Arroyo regime mercilessly shot dead Farly Alcantara, 22, member and former spokesperson of the League of Filipino Students (LFS) in Camarines Norte. Alcantara was shot five times in the head in



front of the Camarines Norte State College in Daet town where he studies. He was the fourth militant student leader killed in Bicol since 2001.

February 8. An unidentified assailant shot dead Dalmacio "Tatay Daki" Gandinao, 74, Bayan Muna provincial coordinator and head of the Misamis Oriental Farmers Association. Tatay Daki was killed at 7 p.m. inside his home in Salay. The assassin threatened with his weapon Gandinao's wife Josefina, their son Eric and grandchild KC who were then eating dinner.

Tatay Daki was at the forefront of many campaigns to demand the pullout of AFP forces from Salay. He fiercely objected to the setting up of military detach-

ments in the community.

After Gandinao's murder, progressive and democratic organizations renewed calls for the removal of the entire 8th IB from Salay. The provincial board passed a resolution condemning the Gandinao killing.

Gandinao is the 114th Bayan Muna member killed since Arroyo assumed power in 2001.



they carried Fuentes to bring him to the hospital, they were fired upon by the soldiers. Fuentes was again hit and died instantly. Sony Buco, one of those who tried to help Fuentes, was wounded in the arm.

The soldiers grabbed their bodies, and in full view of the residents, laid them together, added weapons and personal effects and took pictures to make the victims look like armed guerrillas. The soldiers threatened the residents and ordered them to evacuate the area.

The next day, residents pleaded to be allowed back to their homes to feed their livestock and get some personal belongings. Ten residents were allowed to go back to their community. While waiting for their companions, soldiers fired into a huddled crowd of evacuees, mostly teenagers. Two young girls, Rosemarie Tomas and Aileen Quintos were wounded.

The AFP insists that Gudoy and Fuentes were members of the local militia, that Quintos and Tomas were NPA guerrillas, and that the rest of the wounded civilians were simply caught in the crossfire during their operations. AB

February 3. Elements of the 302nd Scout Ranger Company manhandled and amputated a toe of Jesus Anog, 28, a farmer from Barangay Behind the Clouds, Sta. Cruz, Batuan, Bohol. The troopers accused Anog of being an NPA guerrilla. The incident occurred soon after the NPA ambushed the Scout Rangers in Batuan, killing a trooper and wounding two others.

January 25. Men in plainclothes believed to be elements of the ISAFP/MICO 6 forcibly dragged Felicidad Katalbas, 53, into a van while she was waiting for a bus near the Kabankalan District Hospital in Negros Occidental. Katalbas is a project officer of the Negros Rural Assistance Program, Inc. (NRAP) based in Dumaguete City.

January 21-22. Two civilians were killed and three others were wounded in what the AFP claimed was an armed encounter between elements of the 17th IB and the NPA in Barangay Caruppian, Baggao, Cagayan. Edralin Gudoy and Alvin Fuentes were tending to their fields when fired upon by the soldiers. Neighbors found the wounded Fuentes and Gudoy's bloody corpse in a nearby creek. While

Mock Sulu encounters

Last month, the Arroyo regime crowed about the killing of ten alleged Abu Sayyaf elements in an hour-long encounter in Patikul, Sulu last January 18. The regime and its imperialist master earlier bragged about the killing of Abu Sayyaf leader Abu Sulaiman last January 16. The regime considers such "victories" proof that US armed intervention in the country is correct and necessary.

Gloria Arroyo has promised to deal with the bandit group with a mailed fist. But contrary to pronouncements by the regime and the AFP, it was ordinary Moro civilians and MNLF members that AFP troops killed in separate encounters last January 18. They were direct victims of Bush and Arroyo's war against terrorism.

Jolo human rights groups said that five of the victims were members of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) while four others were innocent civilians.

Three MNLF members were killed when they were fired upon by soldiers in Timpok, Patikul, Sulu at noon of January 18. A Philippine Marines platoon opened fire on MNLF members mixing cement for a house they were constructing. The AFP declared the incident a legitimate military action against the Abu Sayyaf.

A few minutes after the incident, soldiers strafed a minibus with eight passengers on the highway exiting Timpok. Five passengers were killed. Two of them, a father and son surnamed Usman, were MNLF members. The other victims were the bus driver, his 12-year old son and another passenger.

Sarail Jaynaltul, 90, the father-in-law and grandfather of the slain Usmans angrily rushed to the Marine camp upon learning about the killings. He was shot dead before he could enter the camp. All he had in his possession was a piece of wood. AB



NPA launches 4 ambushes

At least eight enemy troopers were killed in separate ambushes launched by the NPA in Oriental Mindoro, Samar, Northern Samar and Bohol this February. A defecting CAFGU element likewise surrendered two rifles to the NPA in Misamis Oriental.

Three policemen were killed in an NPA ambush last February 16 in Barangay San Juan, Bulalacao, Oriental Mindoro.

In Northern Samar, at least two troopers and a CAFGU element were killed and many others seriously wounded when a squad of the Rodante Urtal Command ambushed a section of the 52nd IB at 2:30 p.m.



last February 6. The enemy unit was patrolling Barangay Patigua, Catarman when ambushed. A Red fighter was wounded in the 30-minute firefight.

The 52nd IB is the recruiter, handler and controller of CAFGU formations in Northern Samar. It recruits, organizes and arms criminals that the military uses to intimidate civilians.

Meanwhile, elsewhere in Samar, a soldier was killed when the NPA ambushed elements of the 543rd Engineering Construction Battalion last February 2 in Barangay Libertad, Matuguinao. The said military unit was ambushed while implementing activities for KALAHÍ (Kapit bisig Laban sa Kahirapan), one of the Arroyo regime's anti-insurgency programs. The military uses KALAHÍ to breach suspected NPA bases.

In Batuan, Bohol, a trooper was killed and two others wounded when the NPA Chocolate Hills Command ambushed elements of the 1st Scout Ranger Battalion, Philippine Army Special Operations Command last February 3. The NPA had no casualties.

The incident has been a huge embarrassment for the military especially after the AFP bragged that it has considerably weakened the NPA in Bohol.

In Misamis Oriental, former CAFGU element Parai Gonzales defected to the Eking Balacuit Command of the NPA last February 19. He brought with him two M16 rifles. Gonzales used to be with the 8th IB detachment in Barangay Alipuaton, Salay. AB

Bayan Muna assails Arroyo-Akbayan plot

BAYAN and Bayan Muna strongly condemned the Arroyo camp and Akbayan's plot to slander and eliminate progressive parties from the coming election. This February, Akbayan attempted to have disqualified Bayan Muna, Gabriela and Anakpawis for alleged involvement in the killing of Akbayan members in Nueva Ecija. Akbayan produced before the media three alleged widows in masks who accused the three progressive parties of involvement in the killing of their husbands in Bongabong, Nueva Ecija from 2001-2004.

Bayan Muna and the rest are well aware that this ploy is intended to slander progressive parties and hamper their campaign. They are also aware that this is just part of the dirty campaign by the regime and the AFP against progressive parties. Even before the AFP could mobilize their stooges in Akbayan, Bayan Muna already received information that the Arroyo regime would do its utmost to disqualify progressive parties.

Meanwhile, the PNP is set to file disqualification charges against Bayan Muna, Gabriela and Anakpawis based on false documentary evidence. The PNP is maliciously linking these parties to the NPA. AB

Arroyo regime ready with machinery and funds for cheating

A few days before the start of the electoral campaign, Arroyo appointed former PNP chief Hermogenes Ebdane as Secretary of National Defense. Ebdane and AFP chief Lt. Gen. Hermogenes Esperon are among those linked to the "Hello Garci" controversy. Ebdane was exposed then as an accomplice of former Comelec commissioner Virgilio Garcillano in orchestrating electoral fraud in Mindanao in 2004. He also gave sanctuary to Garcillano when the latter disappeared from public view for five months.

The Arroyo regime is hopeful that by using Ebdane and Esperon, it can use the police and military to cheat in the coming elections as it did in May 2004. Ebdane plotted with the Comelec to give the AFP free rein to interfere in the election by providing vehicles and supposedly securing the ballots while in transport.

Meanwhile, the Ombudsman has been able to save from prosecution Comelec officials implicated in various cases of corruption, including the anomalous P1.3 billion contract awarded to MegaPacific for the

mechanization of the 2004 elections. These officials who have been exposed as accomplices of Garcillano remain in the Comelec and have even been promoted.

It comes as no surprise that the Filipino people have lost trust in the Comelec. According to the Ibon Foundation's latest survey, 71% of the people do not believe that the Comelec has the capability to implement a clean and honest election.

Meanwhile, Arroyo's henchmen in Congress hastily passed a law expanding the PAGCOR franchise under Malacañang's direct management and control. Arroyo is expected to use PAGCOR funds to campaign, bribe and cheat in the coming election.

Arroyo frantically builds "Team Unity"

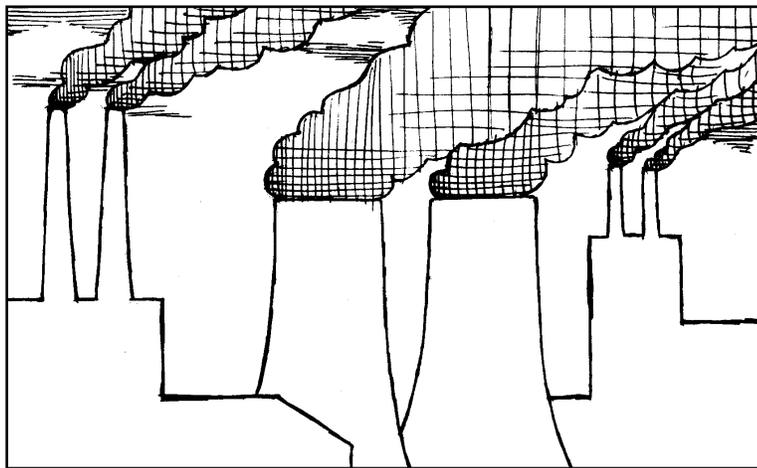
The Arroyo camp literally bought off opposition politicians and popular actors to be able to complete a senatorial slate. The Arroyo camp desperately needs their popularity to boost the low credibility ratings of its own candidates and deflect the many criticisms and accusations hurled against the regime.

Arroyo offered each of them P150-250 million in campaign funds, unlimited use of AFP helicopters, free radio, tv and print advertisements, guestings in government tv and radio programs and above all, the promise that Malacañang would do its utmost to secure their victory.

Opposition rejects and former senators Vicente Sotto and Tessie Oreta and fence-sitters and reelectionist senators Joker Arroyo, Ralph Recto and Edgardo Angara are among those who have been bought off by the regime. **AB**



US corporations exacerbate global warming



The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released its fourth report on global warming last February 2. The report was based on the research of hundreds of prominent scientists specializing in climate change.

The scientists gathered by the IPCC from 113 countries determined that the disturbing rise in the earth's temperature, especially in the past 50 years, has been caused by man's pollution and destruction of the environment. The main culprit is the increasing amount of greenhouse gases in the earth's atmosphere.

About 25% of greenhouse gases emitted throughout the world come from the US which has the largest petroleum refining and consuming industries and where no effective regulations exist to control the pollution they create.

This is why the US refuses to abide by the Kyoto Protocol, an international agreement crafted in 1997 that calls for the programmed control of, and a 5% reduction in, carbon monoxide and five other greenhouse gases from 1999 until 2012. The agreement has been signed by 169 countries.

Mounting pressure has forced US Pres. George W. Bush to feign concern about global warming and announce that he is taking the IPCC report seriously. At the same time, however, Bush said it was still necessary to pinpoint and study the real causes of global warming.

Since assuming office in 2001, Bush has continually claimed that the US is not to blame for the accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Bush covered up the issue by ordering concerned agencies not to issue reports on the volume of greenhouse gases the US discharges into the atmosphere. Thus, his claim that the US

has had one of the best records in controlling the emission of greenhouse gases since 2000 is nothing more than a fat lie.

Since the start, Bush has shown no decisive action on the issue. He instead vehemently protested any step that would obligate American companies to control or reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

The Bush government's intent is to protect the interests of American monopoly capitalists, especially those in the oil and energy industries who are all opposed to any state control of their greenhouse gas emissions.

Anarchic production and the endless pursuit of profit in a capitalist system are the main causes of global warming. In the name of profit, monopoly capitalists will destroy the environment and even humankind's future.

Global warming can only be stopped if the proletariat and the people act to end monopoly capitalism which lies at the root of the problem. **AB**

The real cause of global warming

The earth is wrapped in a layer of air called the atmosphere. Aside from nitrogen and oxygen, the atmosphere includes chemicals called greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide, among others.

Greenhouse gases in the atmosphere prevent the sun's warmth from escaping back into space, thus allowing animals and plants to thrive on earth. Without greenhouse gases, life on earth would be impossible due to extreme cold.

But if there is an overaccumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, too much of the sun's warmth is trapped. This will drastically increase the earth's temperature and endanger life.

Greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide, are rapidly accumulating due to smoke emissions from fossil fuels such as petroleum and coal that are primarily used by huge capitalist industries. The problem is worsened by the denudation of forests which act as a natural filter for carbon dioxide.

Huge capitalist industries have wreaked havoc on the environment since the past century. Imperialists strongly resist the imposition of controls on the use of petroleum

and coal. They insist on using such fuels despite the availability of cleaner alternatives such as hydroelectric, solar and nuclear power.

The earth's temperature started rising during the capitalist system's infancy in the mid-17th century when such fuels began to be widely used to power industries. The rise in the earth's temperature has been especially rapid in the past 20 years.

More frequent disasters. Scientists estimate that the earth's temperature would rise by 2-11.5° F/1.11-6.39° C by 2100.

Global warming hastens the melting of the polar ice cap. This causes a rise in ocean levels that will engulf the most low-lying countries in the world.

The increase in the oceans' surface temperature spawns stronger and more damaging typhoons and hurricanes. The disasters caused by storms have been notably heavy in the past few years.

While some areas are engulfed by floods, others are suffering from drought and serious famine and lack of drinking water. It is estimated that 200-600 million people will starve and 1.1-3.2 billion will have no water to drink by 2080. **AB**

Residents oppose resumption of Lafayette operations

RESIDENTS of Rapurapu, Albay, church workers and environmental organizations strongly condemned the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) for its February 8 decision allowing the reopening of the Lafayette Polymetallic Project. Lafayette's operations were stopped in October 2005 after its mine tailings dam collapsed and spewed toxins into the sea leading to a massive fishkill around Rapurapu.

Aside from rallies, marches and other forms of protest, Rapurapu residents have sent petitions to banks such as The Netherlands-based ABN AMRO, ANZ (Australia and New Zealand Banking Group) and Standard Chartered asking them to stop funding Lafayette because of the damage it has caused to lives, livelihoods and the environment.

NAPOCOR enters into anomalous contract

NAPOCOR'S latest anomalous contract is another added burden for the people. Napocor president Cyril del Callar entered into a ten-year contract with Lanao Hydro Development Corp. (LHDC) and Kephilco-Salcon (Kepco) to help these independent power producers (IPP) sell their electricity supplies.

The LHDC is a Mindanao-based IPP set to build a new 225-megawatt hydropower plant in Agus, Lanao. LHDC was set up by former high-ranking Napocor officials who were able to secure special favorable contracts from their former Napocor colleagues. Kepco is a Korean company in joint ven-

ture with Salcon of Cebu that will build a 200-megawatt coal-fired power plant in Cebu to supply the islands of Cebu, Negros and Panay with power.

In exchange for a commission, Napocor is pressuring distribution utilities and electric cooperatives in the affected areas to purchase electricity from LHDC and Kepco even at a more expensive price. LHDC will sell electricity at ₱4.32/kwh starting 2011, twice the cost of ₱2.1030/kwh approved by the Energy Regulatory Commission for Mindanao.

Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla and Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. president Nieves Osorio deny any knowledge of the contract. The worthless Electricity and Power Industry Reform Act (EPIRA) prohibits Napocor from entering into new energy purchase contracts. Nonetheless, Napocor officials and their accomplice power companies are able to find means to circumvent EPIRA and rake in huge profits and commissions in the process.

PMA alumni humiliate GMA

THE Philippine Military Academy (PMA) alumni's invitation for Senate President Manuel Villar to be the guest of honor during their homecoming last February 17 is indicative of Gloria Arroyo's extreme isolation from even the military establishment.

Malacañang tried to coerce the alumni to withdraw the invitation for the opposition senator. When the alumni refused Arroyo's demand, Malacañang tried to engineer a cold reception for Villar by prohibiting the posting of a "welcome streamer" for him. The PMA alumni again refused the order and threatened to stage a walkout in response to any discourteous treatment of Villar.

On the other hand, some members of the alumni booed when the name of AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr. was announced during the program.

In his speech, Villar lambasted Malacañang's charter change scheme which he said was intended to dissolve the Senate to prevent it from investigating anomalies involving the Arroyo government.

Intensifying Iraqi resistance

IRAQI resistance intensified this February after US Pres. George W. Bush ordered the deployment of 21,000 more American troops to Iraq.

Iraqi guerrillas shot down six US helicopters in the first week of February, even as 34 American troops were killed in different parts of Iraq in the same period. The US lost 334 troops from October 2006-January 2007.

Meanwhile, Iraqi civilians are experiencing mounting hardships. A report by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that about 2.7 million Iraqis fled the country and another million might follow in the next six months due to clearing operations being conducted by American troops' in Baghdad.

The US Congress has outrightly criticized Bush's deployment of more troops to Iraq. Even Bush's fellow Republicans have joined the majority in condemning the continuing occupation of Iraq and the destruction of infrastructure and livelihood in the wartorn country.

US economy in continuing crisis

THE US economy continues to show indicators of crisis.

Last January, the US trade deficit stood at \$748 billion—meaning that it spent more on imported products than it was able to earn from exports in the past year. This is the fifth year in a row that the US economy has been plagued by a growing trade deficit.

The unemployment rate continues to rise because of relentless closures of bankrupt companies. Last February 14, Daimler-Chrysler, one of the biggest car manufacturers announced the layoff of 13,000 workers due to profit losses. About 9,000 of these workers are in Chrysler plants in the US.