



ANG

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Editorial

Intensify the revolutionary struggle amid the worsening crisis

The global capitalist crisis is bound to worsen in the coming years. Even as the crisis batters the industrialized countries, it is expected to wreak even more havoc on backward semicolonies like the Philippines.

The global economic turmoil increasingly devastates the already bankrupt local economy and pushes it deeper into chronic crisis. The Filipino masses have been suffering immensely. Millions more are expected to be condemned to lives of hunger and poverty. Amid all this, it is plunder, immiserating the people and clinging to power that top the rotten US-Arroyo regime's agenda. This all the more demonstrates to the people the need to wage thoroughgoing revolutionary struggle as the only means of putting a stop to the crisis and ending poverty.

The crisis has led to rapid and large-scale job losses in almost all economic sectors, especially those that are closely linked to global capitalist production. Every day, hundreds of workers, semi-proletariat, government

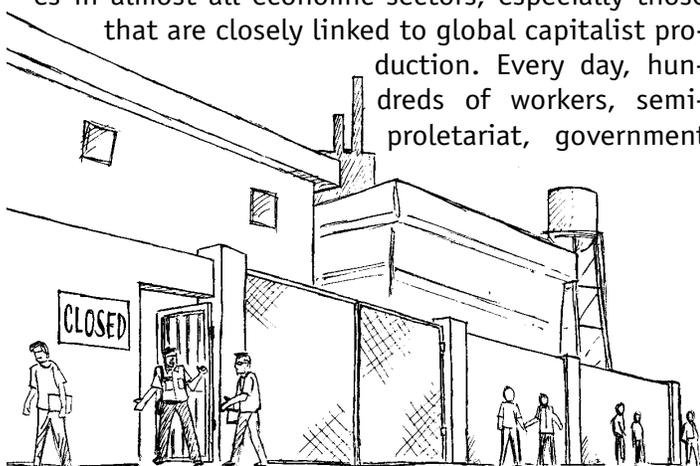
employees and professionals are laid off while thousands of workers face reduced working hours. This has resulted in depressed incomes even as prices of basic commodities rise continuously on a daily basis.

The most vulnerable sectors are those that are heavily dependent on the export of semimanufactures, especially to the US. Due to reduced orders for such products, more than 130,000 workers in this sector were retrenched in 2008. At the start of 2009 alone, over 20,000 workers had been terminated and over 30,000 have had to endure reduced work days because of production slowdowns and factory closures.

The two biggest capitalist enterprises are set to shut down this year. Worse, more than 60 major firms engaged in the manufacture of electronic parts and employing 500,000 workers are in danger of following suit. Another 120,000 workers in garments factories face layoffs. Shutdowns have also been plaguing furniture makers, cement and mining companies and firms engaged in export products assembly, aside from the services sector.

Conservative estimates from government agencies put the number of workers set to lose their jobs this year at 800,000. Independent research institutions and economists, however, place the number of job losses at well over a million in the private sector alone.

Hundreds of thousands of employees in the public sector are in danger of being laid off with the implementation of the US-Arroyo regime's policy of "rationalizing" the bureaucracy in compliance with the Inter-



This issue's highlights...

Arroyos corner World Bank projects PAGE 3

CPP40: Art and multi-media presentations PAGE 5

Bicol against Balikatan PAGE 11

national Monetary Fund's dictates on the bankrupt government to reduce spending.

Meanwhile, thousands of migrant workers have recently been forced to return to the country. Overseas job opportunities have dwindled as a result of the crisis. Current employment contracts are no longer being renewed, and worse, are being prematurely terminated. Close to half a million migrant workers are in danger of losing their jobs this year. With the influx of returning Filipino migrant workers, unemployment in the country will worsen even more.

Unemployment figures will swell as 1.5 million new workers enter the workforce this year, making the number of unemployed and underemployed grow to over 12 million in 2009.

The Filipino people have long been reeling from the crisis of the rotten semicolonial and semifeudal system. Under this system, US imperialism with the connivance of its puppet regime impede genuine industrial development and land reform in the country. They keep the country's economy within the confines of neocolonial trade that

Back to work for Kowloon workers

Protesting workers of Kowloon Restaurant along West Avenue, Quezon City achieved more victories when the National Labor Relations Commission (NLRC)-Third Division ordered the restaurant management on January 20 to allow 73 retrenched workers to resume work and grant them full pay.

The NLRC reversed an earlier decision issued by NLRC Labor Arbitrator Aliman Mangandog declaring illegal the protest pickets staged by the workers during break times on June 20 and 21 of the previous year. This resulted in the unjust dismissal of 73 workers on September 13 and an order requiring them to pay P40,000 in damages to the company.

The workers countered that they staged their protest action only to demand the implementation of the National Capital Regional Wage Board Order No. 13 in August 2007 calling for a P12 increase in daily wages and a P50 hike in the emergency cost of living allowance (ECOLA).

This is but an initial victory, said union president Edmund Navarosa, who added that they expect management to exert all efforts to delay the implementation of the NLRC's decision. The struggle goes on, he said. AB

revolves around the export of agricultural products, natural resources, cheap labor and semi-manufactures. The economy is heavily dependent on the importation of raw materials for reexport and even finished consumer products.

Since the 1990s, the imperialist policy of "globalization" has been

aggravating the local economic crisis. The current global and local crisis clearly demonstrates this policy's bankruptcy. It is this policy, obsequiously perpetuated by the Arroyo regime, that destroys local productive forces, worsens poverty and hunger and plunges the country into deeper crisis.

On the one hand, the Arroyo regime continues to be in denial about the aggravating effect of the world crisis and even of its policies and actions, on the economy and the people. On the other hand, the regime has seized this opportunity to plunder the nation's coffers and hold on to power. It has passed an "economic stimulus package" in the amount of P330 billion allegedly to keep the economy vibrant amid the deteriorating global crisis.

It is not clear at all, though, where the funds for these projects will be sourced. Aside from budget allocations and funds rechannelled from various government agencies, Malacañang is targeting GSIS and



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Contents

Editorial: Intensify the revolutionary struggle amid the worsening crisis	1
Back to work for Kowloon workers	2
Arroyos corner World Bank projects	3
Legacy Group scam	4
CPP40: Art and multimedia presentations	5
Study of Marxist dialectics in NCR	6
Victorious NPA offensives	6
Destructive mining in Tampakan	7
People boot out OceanaGold	8
Fascist state on a rampage	9
Bicol against Balikatan	11

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SSS security funds despite strong opposition to this move. Some funds are supposed to come from private sector initiatives, but no one has made any pledges.

The regime claims that this program can create three million new jobs. The truth is that the program's funds will only be plundered and used to strengthen the Arroyo camp's hold on power. The masses will not benefit at all from this project. Instead, the scheme will only add to their burdens, especially since most of the funds will surely be sourced from them.

The Arroyo regime can only proffer empty promises and employ inutile solutions that will end up worsening the crisis and condemning the Filipino people to deeper misery.

The people have no other option but to wage struggle and advance their interests. They must grapple with today's major economic and political issues and wage relentless struggle to decisively end this regime that protects the ruling semicolonial and semifeudal system that is mired in a permanent and worsening crisis.

More than ever, workers, peasants, government employees, the urban poor, the unemployed, students and other sectors must act collectively to oppose worsening unemployment, widespread hunger, deteriorating social services, corruption, fascist repression and the Arroyo regime's maneuvers to perpetuate itself in power.

The people must muster their collective strength in the streets, factories, offices, farms, schools, communities and other venues, raise their level of struggle and further advance the revolution in order to achieve decisive social changes and champion the inter-

Arroyos corner World Bank projects

Gloria and Mike Arroyo are once again reeking with the filthy stench of corruption. Mike Arroyo has figured prominently in a World Bank report implicating him in a bid-rigging scandal involving billions of pesos worth of World Bank projects. These, as well as other gigantic infrastructure projects in the country were coordinated by E.C. de Luna Construction Corp., who, sources say, is actually owned by Mike Arroyo. Official owner Eduardo C. de Luna is actually his dummy.

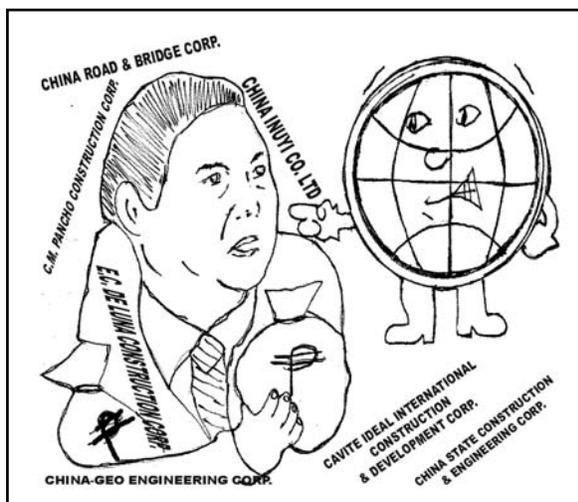
The bid-rigging has pushed up the contract price of road building projects by 10-15%, with a third to a half of the markup ending up in Mike Arroyo's pockets.

E.C. de Luna Construction Corp.'s involvement in this anomaly has led the World Bank to ban the company permanently from participating in any of its projects. Three local and four foreign big construction companies also involved in the bid-rigging conspiracy were likewise banned from doing business with the World Bank for a period of four to eight years. It was the World Bank that uncovered E.C. de Luna Construction Corp.'s role in the WB projects bid-rigging mess. Details of the bribery and manipulation that have marked their Philippine projects are contained in the bank's investigation report.

The World Bank had submitted

copies of the report to the Ombudsman, Department of Finance (DoF) and Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) as early as November 2007 but these agencies simply sat on it. Worse, the DPWH continued to grant billions of pesos worth of government projects to these firms. DPWH Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane lamely explained that it was only the World Bank that had banned the companies.

More and more witnesses have come out exposing Mike Arroyo and his closest allies' insatiable greed. One of them was Japanese investor Tomatu Suzuka, who was surprised when Mike Arroyo and a senator who was a member of Gloria Arroyo's political party shamelessly demanded money from him to do business in the Philippines. The World Bank report also disclosed that giving bribes to government officials is a common practice in the country. Another investor has also revealed that before he could be granted a contract, he had to seek an audience with "De Luna" first (referring to Mike Arroyo). The same investor admitted that executives from his former company had indeed connived with Mike Arroyo to secure contracts. Secre-



tary Ebdane has likewise admitted that it is common practice among contractors involved in government projects to engage in bid-rigging. He, however, denied that Malacañang or his agency had any hand in such anomalies.

Malacañang is now scrambling to come up with ways to prevent details of the scandal from spreading any further. It ordered Congress to launch a mock investigation in order to absolve the anomaly-tainted companies from blame, especially E.C. de Luna. Arroyo's minions dutifully complied. The so-called investigation, which was so hastily and haphazardly con-

ducted, was downright ridiculous.

The Ombudsman, on the other hand, has still not acted on the case over a year and a half after receiving the results of the World Bank's investigation.

In the Senate, Arroyo's rabid ally Sen. Miriam Santiago insisted on handling the investigation of the companies involved, but suspended the probe after only one similarly hastily and haphazardly conducted hearing. She was later forced to announce that the hearings would be resumed after other senators threatened to push through with the investigation under the auspices of another Senate committee. **AB**

Legacy Group scam

Thirteen rural banks and three pre-need companies under the Legacy Group of Companies collapsed in December 2008. Legacy's pre-need companies were involved in selling college educational and other similar plans. The company owner officially declared bankruptcy as a result of Legacy's inability to service bank withdrawals and its failure to pay its planholders.

The closure of banks and pre-need firms under the Legacy Group is a heavy blow, especially to parents who had hoped that they would be able to send their children to school through the company's college educational plans.

More than P14 billion worth of bank deposits of 132,642 depositors and P3.6 billion worth of securities have vanished due to the Legacy Group's fraudulent practi-

ces. The Legacy Group is owned by Celso de los Angeles, mayor of Sto. Domingo, Albay and a member of Gloria Arroyo's party KAMPI. A week before he filed for bankruptcy, De los Angeles had sold real estate property in Ayala Alabang worth P57 million to prevent it from coming under receivership.

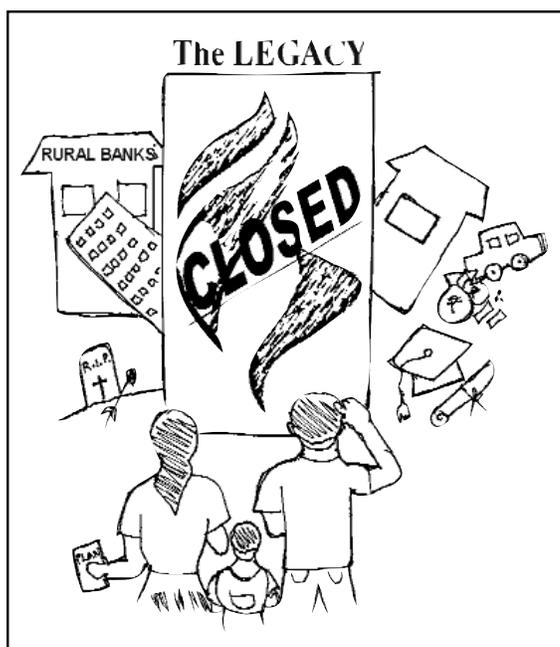
The Legacy Group's bankruptcy is part of the global financial collapse. The worldwide crisis has likewise led to P40 billion in losses in the entire pre-need sector after the latter invested a substantial amount of capital in toxic financial instruments, such as housing mortgage deals in the US.

The Legacy Group also masterminded a scam, luring in depositors with tantalizingly high interest rates. Depositors were supposed to receive monthly checks and double their money in three years. The deal was in fact a pyramid-ing scam where payments to earlier depositors came

from the money put in by newer ones, thus creating the illusion that they were involved in a highly lucrative enterprise. De los Angeles, on the other hand, reinvested the bank deposits he received and delayed payments to clients while using the money to fund his other businesses. Through these maneuvers, the Legacy Group was able to corner 10-11% of rural bank deposits in the country.

De Los Angeles had already previously engaged in this type of scam. As early as 1984, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) had investigated him for his involvement in three small banks the BSP had ordered closed for swindling. He shifted to securities investments by purchasing small securities companies and buying out and reestablishing a number of rural banks. He eventually banded these firms together under his Legacy Group of Companies.

The Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation (PDIC) resumed the probe on the Legacy Group in 2005 because of its dubious schemes. But Richard Tan, then PDIC president said that then Majority Floor Leader (currently House Speaker) Prospero Nograles intervened to halt the investigation and lift the pressure from De los Angeles. Nograles has a big stake in the business as he has directly invested P18 million in the Legacy Group. **AB**



Celebrating the CPP's 40th year with works of art and multimedia presentations

Comrades celebrated the 40th anniversary of the reestablishment of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) by presenting new video productions and other cultural works. The video presentations formed part of the activities of comrades and the masses who gathered on December 26, 2008 in various guerrilla fronts across the country. Following are some of the productions of Sine Proletaryo and other revolutionary video groups.

40 (Kwarenta) is the main video production among the series of short productions of Sine Proletaryo hailing the 40th anniversary of the CPP. Sine Proletaryo is under the CPP Information Bureau. Aside from *Kwarenta*, it also released other short films namely *Pagkalinga*, *Mandirigma ng Sambayanan*, *Ang Mga Kaibigan* and *Buhay Gerilya*.

These video productions reflect 40 years of the CPP's history and victories by showing the lives and struggles of comrades and the masses. They portray their daily activities as they fulfill their tasks in the fields of armed struggle, agrarian revolution and people's organ-

izing.

Other regions were likewise active in coming up with their own multimedia productions. Isnayp, Bicol's revolutionary media launched its website (*isnayp.blogspot.com*) that highlights its very own audio-visual productions, exhibiting new videos specifically crafted for the occasion—*Martsa 40*, *Bikol 40* and *40 Tanghal*. Isnayp also features revolutionary productions from various areas in the Philippines such as *Cherish the NPA* by Central Luzon, *Kilab* and *The Green Guerrillas* by NPA-Mindanao, along with some videos from the NDFP Secretariat. Also posted in Isnayp are mainstream documenta-

ries tackling the revolutionary movement.

Also striking are video products like the musical video *Pulso Sg Panahon* produced by Panay and *Cuz We Luv the People* created by Sining Gerilya of Southern Tagalog and the recruitment video *BHB* by the Ilocos-Cordillera Region. All these highlight the variety of roles played by Red fighters—they are educators, medics, soldiers, organizers and cultural workers. There are scenes that demonstrate the solidarity of the NPA and the Filipino masses.

There are likewise photo-essays from Eastern Visayas ("NPA's day-to-day life"; "The people's Army and the masses"; "The NDF-EV Spokesperson in photographs", "Mga retrato han selebrasyon han ika-40 nga anibersaryo han PKP") and Bicol ("Ang mga tunay na doktor ng masa") and photographs of the anniversary celebration.

As their contribution to the celebration, comrades from Bicol put together *Pa-iraya*, a book celebrating the revolutionary spirit of 11 revolutionary martyrs of the region. Another book was released by Far South Mindanao Region titled *Ruby* featuring tributes to martyrs and heroes of the revolutionary movement in the region.

These productions exemplify renewed vigor in producing creative works and the use of more advanced technology in arousing the people and propagating revolutionary principles. Such invaluable contributions further breathe life into the celebration of the Party's 40th anniversary and will continue to enliven future celebrations of the CPP's brilliant achievements. **AB**





Study of Marxist dialectics in the NCR

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) in the National Capital Region (NCR) successfully conducted a regional study conference on Marxist dialectics attended by cadres from various districts and lines of work. The four-day conference, which was attended by 25 cadres served as the opening salvo in the region's celebration of the CPP's 40th anniversary. Their main references were Comrade Mao Zedong's writings *On Contradiction*, *On Practice* and *32 Examples of Dialectics*.

The study of Marxist dialectics aims to deepen understanding on the topic and is part of the effort to strengthen the cadres' capacity to lead practical revolutionary tasks. They were trained in the correct application of the mass line and flexibility in tactics in carrying out their individual tasks. The course also included collective analyses of concrete experiences and lessons culled by the cadres.

The course likewise tackled the importance of studying dialectics and solving problems encountered

by comrades and collectives in their daily lives. The lesson also focused on the need to teach the masses the Marxist method of analyzing issues.

The study also encouraged comrades to take the initiative in reading other important writings of the great communists.

After the course, the cadres held a program to celebrate the CPP anniversary, where the statement of the CPP NCR Regional Committee was read. The statement summarized the experiences and

lessons of the past year and laid out the overall challenges and tasks of the revolutionary movement in the metropolis.

Both the study conference and celebration inspired the comrades to present and create revolutionary works of art. The videos *Kwarenta* and *Pagkalinga* produced by Sine Proletaryo were shown. The delegates delivered messages, performed songs and read revolutionary poems.

The comrades view the study conference and other succeeding education conferences as a means of arming the cadres ideologically and enabling them to grasp lessons and skillfully face their challenges and tasks in the revolutionary struggle in the NCR and the entire country. AB

NPA tactical offensives

Six military elements were killed and 11 others were wounded in a series of tactical offensives initiated by the New People's Army (NPA) from the last week of January to the first week of February.

February 2. Sr. Insp. Emelix Mabalot, Bansalan PNP chief was killed along with two policemen after an ambush by the NPA in Sitio Balagunon, Barangay Manaca, Bansalan, Davao del Sur. Another policeman was wounded in the clash. They were following up a reported killing in Barangay Manaca when they were ambushed along the way.

January 31. A soldier belonging to the 71st IB was killed and two others were wounded in an NPA ambush on two squads of soldiers aboard a military truck in Barangay Labi, Bongabon, Nueva Ecija.

January 30. An enemy soldier was killed and another wounded in a clash between NPA Red fighters and elements of the 29th IB in Sitio Katipunan, Barangay Tugaya, Valencia City, Bukidnon.

January 29. Six soldiers and a CAFGU element were wounded after the NPA detonated a bomb along the path of a military convoy traversing the Pañalam-Paquibato Road in Paquibato District, Davao City. Col. Joel Ibañez, Philippine Army 1003rd Bde chief was aboard one of the vehicles in the convoy.

January 28. Two soldiers of the 30th IB Charlie Company were wounded in a clash between a military unit and NPA Red fighters in Sitio Pirada, Barangay Del Pilar, Cabadbaran City, Agusan del Norte.

January 23. Red fighters seized three 9 mm pistols, computers, and other military paraphernalia in an assault on the PNP headquarters in Carmen, Agusan del Sur. Killed in the gunfight was SPO4 Arsenio Aboc, the town's deputy chief of police. The Red guerrillas destroyed communications equipment and a police vehicle before withdrawing from the scene. AB

NPA and people resist destructive mining in Tampakan

Guerrillas under the Valentine Palamine Command (VPC) of the New People's Army in Far South Mindanao Region raided a police station in Tampakan, South Cotabato on January 29, wounding three policemen and seizing an M16 and a caliber .45 pistol.

The Red fighters assaulted the headquarters to punish the policemen for serving as bodyguards of Xstrata-Sagittarius Mining Inc. (X-SMI). In tandem with military forces, X-SMI supports and utilizes the PNP to curb the people's growing opposition to the company's destructive mining operations, VPC commander Ka Dencio Madrigal said in a statement.

The VPC-BHB also scored the local government units of Kiblawan, South Cotabato and Columbio, Sultan Kudarat for facilitating the expansion of X-SMI's operations and recruiting paramilitary elements to its security forces.

X-SMI is 62.5% owned by Xstrata Copper, a Swiss company and by Indophil Resources NL, an Australian firm which owns 32.23%. The latter has earned worldwide notoriety for causing environmental destruction in its host countries. X-SMI is currently engaged in mining exploration activities in the upland municipality of Tampakan and neighboring towns. The exploration area covers the South Cotabato-North Cotabato-Sultan Kudarat-Davao del Sur quadri-boundary where an estimated 12.8 million tons of high-grade copper reserves and 15.2 million ounces in gold reserves can be found. The depos-

its are said to be the biggest in Asia.

The company has been conducting mining explorations in the last five years to determine the exact

location of these minerals. These explorations have already caused huge cracks in the exploration areas and have resulted in landslides.

An investigation in September revealed growing fissures in Barangays Danlag and Pula Bato in Tampakan. The crack found in Sitio Tukay Miasong, Danlag was more than 50 meters in length and a

foot wide. Another fissure found on September 20 in Kampo Kilot, Pula Bato during heavy rains prompted the evacuation of over 20 families who feared being buried in a landslide.

Their fears stemmed from a landslide that had occurred in Sitio Makili, Lower Kampo Kilot, Barangay Pula Bato in 2005 that piled mud across an area of one hectare. Earlier, on November 22, 2005, similar cracks had been seen in Sitio Snep, Barangay Tablu, measuring about 5-10 meters long and 1-1.5 meters deep.

Experts hired by X-SMI have admitted that landslides and flooding along river banks have occurred because of a diversion in the water flow. The cracks found in Danlag and Pula Bato continue to grow in size especially during heavy downpours. Should these fissures give way under pressure from the raging waters and cause a landslide, the devastation would affect a vast area, especially barangays where X-SMI's exploration activities have also left gaping holes, some of them 200 to 750 meters deep.

A study conducted by the London Working Group on Mining in the Philippines, an international environmentalist group, revealed that continuing mining operations in six sites in the country, including Tampakan, will result in the massive destruction of ricefields, thus further reducing already inadequate rice supplies in the Philippines. Rivers and seas around these areas will also be poisoned. In particular, it warns of the imminent dangers posed by the current digging and open-pit mining operations in the X-SMI exploration area after no less than PHILVOCS declared that the area lies along four fault lines. Open-pit mining involves huge excavations as opposed to tunneling. Studies have shown that open-pit mining may



cause earthquakes if done in areas sitting along multiple fault lines.

The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) called on December 10 for a temporary halt to mining activities in the Philippines due to its destructive effects. Even church officials in Koronadal City have signified their strong opposition to mining activities in the province. According to Fr. Romeo Q. Cathedral, social action director of the Diocese of Marbel, various forms of collective protest show that the X-SMI mining project is opposed not only by the church but by the people as well.

On October 22, farmers and Lumad led by the

South Cotabato Farmers Association (SOCOFA) took to the streets of Koronadal City, capital of South Cotabato to demand the the passage of a law in the sangguniang panlalawigan prohibiting open-pit mining in the entire province. SOCOFA spokeseson Felix Española said that if X-SMI's open-pit mining continues, the ensuing soil erosion and the spillage of toxic chemicals such as cyanide and mercury from the mine sites to the rivers will gravely affect ricefields in low-lying areas. Lake Buluan, the main source of milk fish and tilapia in the region, will not be spared, nor will the five major rivers that empty into the Davao and Sarangani Gulfs. **AB**

People expel OceanaGold from Nueva Vizcaya

OceanaGold Philippines has completely backed out from mining gold and copper in Didipio, Nueva Vizcaya this year. Residents celebrated their triumph after over a decade of people's struggle in Nueva Vizcaya against destructive large-scale mining operations. The people never waned in their fight despite militarization, deception and bribery by giant foreign corporations and officials of the Arroyo regime.

Since 2006, OceanaGold has been trying to conduct mining operations in Kasibu, Nueva Vizcaya. It was able to acquire the Financial

and Technical Assistance Agreement (FTAA) granted by the DENR to Climax-Arimco Mining Corp as early as 1994. But residents supported by church people, academics, indigenous people's rights advocates, environmental groups and many others raised a howl of protests.

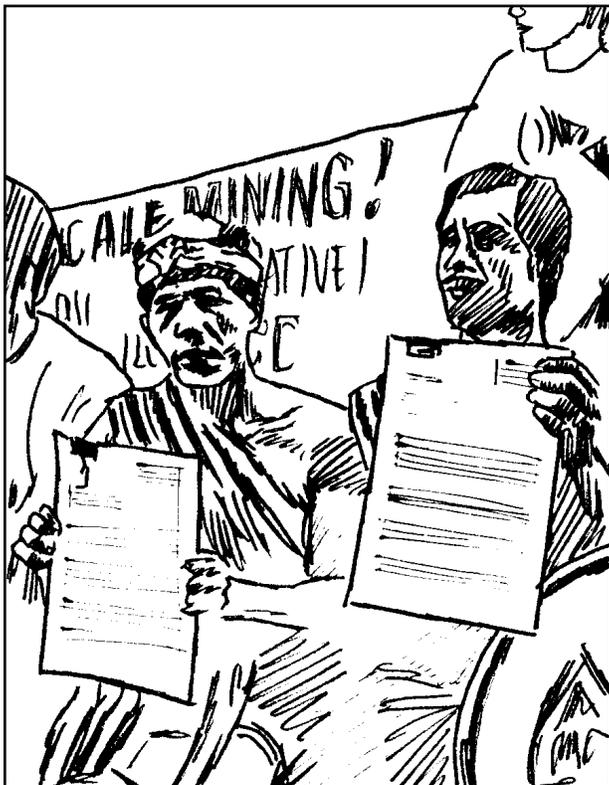
With Arroyo's strong backing, the foreign company did everything in its power to buy out, deceive and pressure the people and silence the opposition. People opposed to the mining operations were hailed to court. The Arroyo regime also attempted to suppress the people by deploying military forces that wrought fear and violated the people's rights.

The people's barricades were breached and bulldozed. Several houses in Didipio, Kasibu were demolished to give way to the construction of the company office. Since June, the people have fortified their barricades to prevent the entry of company equipment.

The people's struggle never wavered. Residents filed charges against the company for human rights violations and asserted the right of the indigenous people to their lands. The protests were brought right to the Australian government's own doorstep.

The company underwent a series of ownership changes as a result of the difficulties it encountered in proceeding with the mining project. In December, OceanaGold officers announced that the company was unable to continue with its operations, putting the blame on the huge expenses the firm has incurred because of long delays in the implementation of the project. They had allegedly run out of funds.

Despite the suspension of its operations, however, local leaders are demanding compensation from the mining firm for all its violations against the people of Kasibu and the damage it has caused in the area as a result of its initial operations. They have also demanded the nullification of the FTAA granted by the reactionary regime. **AB**



Court orders release of Saladero, 5 labor leaders

The Oriental Mindoro Regional Trial Court in Calapan City has ordered the release of Atty. Remigio Saladero and five labor leaders of the "Southern Tagalog 72" (ST72) after dismissing on February 5 the multiple murder case filed against them. The announcement was made by the Center for Trade Union and Human Rights (CTUHR). Operatives of the Antipolo PNP, the Military Intelligence Group and Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (MIG-ISAFP) arrested the prominent labor lawyer from his house in Antipolo City on October 23 and jailed him in Calapan.

The CTUHR added that the criminal charges against Saladero and five others were dismissed because cases such as multiple murder should not be lumped together in a single case. The six detainees were charged with multiple murder and multiple frustrated murder following an ambush by the New People's Army in Puerto Galera, Oriental Mindoro in March 2006 that killed two police officers and wounded three others.

Freed after almost three months of detention at the Calapan City provincial jail were Nestor San Jose of Pinag-isang Samahan ng mga Tsuper at Operator Nationwide (PISTON)-Rizal; Rogelio Galit, spokesperson of the Katipunan ng mga Magbubukid sa Kabite (Kamagsasaka-Ka); Crispin Zapanta, Bayan Muna member; Arnaldo Seminiano, Ilaw-Buklod ng Manggagawa (IBM) organizer; and Emmanuel Dionida, Labor Education Advocacy Development Response Services (LEADERS) executive director.

Still in detention at the Oriental Mindoro Provincial Jail is Leonardo Arceta, an organizer of the Organized Labor Association in Line Industries and Agriculture-Kilusang Mayo Uno (OLALIA-KMU) who was arrested in Sta. Rosa, Laguna on February 2. AB

Court grants writ of amparo to Balao

The court has approved the petition for a writ of amparo filed by the family of a missing activist. Judge Benigno Galacgac of the Benguet Regional Trial Court has ordered ranking local government, military and police officials to immediately surface James Balao or otherwise disclose where he is detained or confined, and respect and protect his civil and constitutional rights and liberty.

Balao was abducted by armed men believed to be military intelligence agents on September 17, 2008 in Benguet. He was one of the founders of the Cordillera People's Alliance (CPA) and is currently a member of its education and research commission staff. Long before he disappeared, Balao had reported that he and his family were under surveillance. AB

Students file military harassment charges before CHED

The Tanggulan Youth Network for Human Rights and Liberties (Tanggulan) led a group of students in filing complaints before the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) against harassment and surveillance by the Armed Forces of the Philippines. The complainants were students of Arellano University, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, Jose Rizal University and the University of the Philippines.

Biyaya Quizon, Tanggulan spokesperson and chairperson of the Students Christian Movement of the Philippines (SCMP) scored CHED for allowing reactionary state agents to use its office to malign student leaders and put their security at risk. In particular, Quizon cited a memo issued by CHED Region VI (Western Visayas) granting permission to the Civil Military Operations Battallion to conduct so-called "counter-insurgency awareness seminars" in the schools.

The military brands student activists as recruiters of the New People's Army in these seminars conducted in high schools and colleges.

Such military abuses are a violation of the students' freedom of expression and action and their right to self-organization, added Tanggulan. AB



AFP nabs 5 Negros farmers

Elements of the 11th IB of the Philippine Army illegally arrested five peasant activists and charged them with rebellion and illegal possession of firearms.

Rene Boy and Junior Moreno, Ronilo Balismo, Ritchelyn Lozano and Budok Bilado were arrested in their homes in Barangay Buenavista, Himamaylan, Negros Occi-

dental on February 2. The military planted weapons, a Communist Party flag and several documents to connect them to the NPA although they were ordinary civilians. The victims are members of the Kapisanan sa mga Mangunguma sa Buenavista, an allied organization of the militant Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas. **AB**

Detained KMP leader stages hunger strike to demand release

Randall Echanis, Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) deputy secretary general for external affairs is currently on hunger strike to demand his immediate release. He began his protest fast on January 29 in his prison cell at the Manila City Jail.

Echanis is among 50 personalities slapped with trumped-up murder charges in connection to an alleged purge in Inopacan, Leyte 20 years ago. It has been a year since his arrest in Bago City on January 28, 2008 while he was

in a consultation with sugar farm workers.

Among those joining him in his hunger strike are his son Ramill Echanis; Antonio Flores, KMP national auditor; Sr. Pat Fox of the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines; Salvador Frances, Pampalakaya-Pilipinas spokesperson; Cathy Estabillo of Amihan; Cherry Clemente, Anakpawis national secretary general; Pedro Gonzales, Pampalakaya-Southern Tagalog secretary general; and Azel Pinpin of Kamagsasaka-Ka. **AB**

NPA-ST condemns abduction of medic

The Melito Glor Command of the New People's Army-Southern Tagalog strongly condemned the arrest and abduction of Marilyn Anayat (known as "Myra Bautista"), 22 years old, who was recuperating at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Sta. Mesa, Manila on January 9.

Ka Myra, a medic, was wounded in a legitimate encounter between the NPA and police forces on January 3 in Macabud, Montalban, Rizal. She was applying first aid to two policemen who had

been wounded in the clash when one of them shot her in the stomach.

She had just undergone an operation when agents of the PNP Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) led by an agent who identified himself as Major Doble forcibly took her. The Melito Glor Command demanded that Ka Myra be immediately transferred to the custody of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) so that her rights as an *hors de combat* could be protected. **AB**



AFP abducts 3 Red fighters

Elements of the 11th IB and Scout Rangers abducted three cadres of the Front 25 Operations Command of the New People's Army on January 25 in Sitio Pulang Lupa, Barangay Ngan, Compostela, Compostela Valley. Nabbed were 41-year old Ruel Cabales (Ka Rael); 35-year old Nelson Carvajosa (Ka Janggo); and 31-year old Catherine Cacdac (Ka Kulay). Ka Kulay is pregnant.

Witnesses said the military dragged the three NPA comrades out of a house at around 2 a.m. and forced them into a waiting armored personnel carrier (APC). A day before the incident, the three Red fighters had conducted a mediation meeting to help settle long-standing local problems in the community.

Despite the mediation of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the military has not surfaced the three comrades.

Ka Rigoberto Sanchez, spokesperson of the Merardo Arce Command-Southern Mindanao Operations Command challenged the military to accord the victims the same humane treatment the NPA gives its prisoners of war in line with international war protocols and international humanitarian law. **AB**

Bicolanos rally against Balikatan

More than 22,000 protesters from various Bicol provinces staged a protest rally on January 22 to oppose the scheduled Balikatan exercises in the region. Headed by the Bicolano Alliance for Nationalism Against Balikatan (BAN Balikatan), an estimated crowd of 8,000 in Masbate; 7,000 in Sorsogon; 5,000 in Albay; and more than 2,000 in Camarines Sur and Camarines Norte trooped to the streets with the cry: "Stop Balikatan!"

The joint military exercises of the AFP and the US military are scheduled to begin in three Bicol provinces—Albay, Masbate and Sorsogon. The Balikatan exercises will be conducted on the pretext of launching a humanitarian mission for typhoon victims.

Various progressive organizations and personalities participated in the protest action. KARAPATAN-Bicol and Kabataang Pinoy of Bicol raised fears of intensified human rights abuses in the region should the joint military exercises push through. Aside from the blatant betrayal of the country's sovereignty, the Balikatan "war games" will put the lives of Bicolanos in danger.

Tindog Atenista, an alliance of groups and personalities from Ateneo de Naga demanded the scrapping of the Mutual Defense Treaty and Visiting Forces Agreement as these were being used as pretexts for foreign intervention in the country. PISTON-CONDOR-Bicol, for its part, added that Balikatan is an instrument to further protect interests in the country, including the oil industry.

The people are well aware that the joint Philippine-US war games in Bicol signal heightened US military intervention in the country and the direct involvement of its troops in the counter-revolutionary war of the AFP against the New People's Army.

Its much vaunted humanitarian objectives only serve as cover for US troops to gain access to guerril-

la fronts to carry out physical and social terrain mapping, conduct surveillance, recruit local agents and influence the local governments and social infrastructure.

Meanwhile, war exercises in Panay dubbed "Balance Piston 09-1" began on January 26 and is set to last for 25 days. Conducted at Camp Macario B. Peralta, Jr. in Jamindan, Capiz, Panay, the war exercises will be held in 33,000 hectares of the Tumanduk tribe's ancestral lands.

Holding Balance Piston in Camp Peralta not only constitutes a blatant disregard for the Filipino people's interests but is also a big insult to the Tumanduk who are continuously victimized by state fascism and AFP abuses.



The ancestral lands of the Tumanduk were declared as a military reservation pursuant to a presidential decree executed by former President Diosdado Macapagal. The joint military exercises clearly target the revolutionary movement of the people.

In response, the Communist Party of the Philippines has ordered all units of the New People's Army, particularly in Bicol and Panay to launch as many tactical offensives as they can to oppose the US-RP joint military exercises. **AB**

UAV presentation falls flat

A US unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) or drone exploded in mid-air in Masbate on January 29 while US military officials were demonstrating its operations before the local military at around 6:30 p.m. People who were within the vicinity of the 507th PNP Provincial Mobile Group camp in Unson, Masbate witnessed the explosion.

The UAV is used in aerial surveillance and in mapping Masbate's land and seas. The incident further revealed the expanding role of the US military in the counter-insurgency operations of the AFP and PNP. It has exposed Balikatan 02-1's so-called "humanitarian mission" as a fake and as mere gimmickry, said National Democratic Front-Bicol spokesperson Greg Bañares in a statement on January 30.

He challenged ranking officers of the 9th ID-PA, 901st Bde and PNP to explain to the public the explosion of the US' UAV while it was flying over the towns of Pio V. Corpus and Esperanza, Masbate. **AB**