



EDITORIAL

Unleash wide-scale land reform and smash Duterte's brutal war in the countryside

In the face of the intensified brutality of Duterte's total war in the countryside, the peasant masses with their revolutionary forces must unleash a widespread land reform movement as an important backbone of the people's all-out resistance against the rampaging fascist regime.

Employing absolute powers, Duterte has imposed a reign of terror across the country. Over the past months, he has set loose hordes of military and police troops to lay siege on entire communities, ransack homes and commit abominable terrorist atrocities. They target villages where peasants are actively fighting for their rights. The attacks have been extra vicious in Negros and Samar provinces, as well as in Bukidnon and Misamis Oriental.

More than 20 rural village leaders have been hunted down and murdered in cold blood since December. Residents are arbitrarily accused of being members or supporters of the New People's Army, rounded up and falsely presented as "surrenderees." Men are conscripted to join paramilitaries and forced to render labor to set up military detachments.

The ruthlessness with which

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NPA ambushes PNP in Mt. Province

THE NEW PEOPLE'S Army (NPA)-Mt. Province ambushed operating troopers of the Philippine National Police (PNP) who attempted to sabotage the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the NPA on March 29.

The Red fighters fired upon the operatives at around 9 a.m. in Mt. Gonggong-o in the town of Bauko. An operative was slain while another was wounded. On March 31, the NPA unit also fired at operating PNP and AFP troopers tailing a unit which launched an offensive in Mt. Makilakilat, Tadian.

In a related news, the NPA-Panay mounted six harassment operations. These include the harassment against a CAFGU Active Auxiliary detachment in Barangay Osorio I, San Remegio, Antique on March 15 and 19; against CAFGU forces on March

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Duterte conducts his war aims to weaken the people's will to resist and make them surrender to his tyranny. His attacks are bound to become more depraved as he is set to rig the upcoming the elections and accelerate preparations to establish a naked fascist dictatorial rule.

We must smash Duterte's brutal war and frustrate his aim of crushing the people's resistance to his tyrannical regime and scheme to establish a fascist dictatorship. He and his accomplices must be made accountable and punished for their innumerable crimes against the people. We must expose the lies and illusions being peddled by Duterte and his military and police officers and expose all their barbarities.

To defeat Duterte's total war against the people, it is crucial that the people in the countryside rise up in large numbers and wage both economic and political struggles. Their antifeudal, as well as anti-imperialist economic struggles are inextricably linked with, are at the base of, and

provide the impetus to their antifascist political struggles to defend their democratic rights. We must pay attention to the economic difficulties of the peasant masses and address their well-being in order to stir their revolutionary fervor to resist Duterte's brutal war.

It is important to arouse and mobilize the peasant masses in large numbers to carry out widespread mass campaigns to reduce rent and interest, raise wages, ensure fair prices of farm produce and increase production through basic forms of cooperation. These are the key components of the Party's minimum program for land reform. The maximum program for land distribution can be carried out in revolutionary base areas where it can be administered and defended.

These land reform campaigns demonstrate in plain terms the difference between the fascist regime and the revolutionary movement, between those forces which oppress and burden the peasant masses and those who seek raise their standards

of living and an end to their oppression.






These mass campaigns thoroughly expose the fakery of Duterte's "land reform" and his policy of widespread land-use conversion and landgrabbing in favor of big landlords and big mining and plantation companies. These also expose the band-aid and deceptive nature of the reactionary regime's welfare measures such as the conditional-cash transfer program (4Ps), the PaMaNa and the Kalahi-CIDSS which offer cosmetic projects that merely conceal the grave social and economic diseases afflicting the people.

These campaigns must be carried out alongside other campaigns to demand a stop to the liberalization of agricultural imports that bears down on rural production and income, to clamor for state subsidy and debt relief amid drought conditions, to demand a return of the coco levy fund, to resist the entry of megadams, airports and other destructive infrastructure projects, to resist land reclamation in coastal areas, to oppose plantations and mining operations, to demand respect for ancestral lands and other campaigns to uphold the rights and welfare of the peasant masses and minority peoples.

Over the next few months, we must carry out these campaigns more fervently. Party cadres at various levels of leadership must be assigned to ensure that tasks in waging mass struggles are carried out. We must better our past efforts and aim to bring peasant struggles to levels higher than before.

To carry out these mass campaigns, we must help the peasant masses organize themselves into revolutionary peasant associations or strengthen existing ones. These must be built at the village, intervillage, municipal and district levels to raise the capability of the peasant masses to organize and coordinate their actions and gather the greatest possible collective strength. To

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help raise production, peasant associations can build mutual-aid teams or work collectives as well as other forms of production cooperation. Funds can be collected, raised or allotted to help boost production.

We must see to it that these campaigns are successfully carried out. This should be measured in palpable terms, where the peasant masses enjoy the benefits of higher income, greater supply of food and better living conditions attained through collective struggle. There must be accompanying campaigns for literacy and numeracy, public health, cultural advancement and other campaigns to address peasants' urgent concerns.

In waging these campaigns, the peasant masses are galvanized to resist the fascist campaign of suppression being mounted by the reactionary armed forces in connivance with local despots and warlords. They are stirred to defend their rights to assert their demand for land reform and better economic conditions. They become more militant in defending their democratic rights and further encouraged to wholeheartedly take part in the armed struggle and provide it with boundless support.

A powerful peasant antifascist movement must arise across the country, as part of the broad united front against Duterte's tyranny. It must vigorously defend democratic rights and resist Duterte's all-out war of suppression in the countryside. There must be concerted effort and coordination, between the peasants in one village and another, in one province and another, within a region and across the country. Without these, Duterte will continue to have the temerity to commit one fascist act after another. Every village being attacked by the fascists must be defended by all. Every fascist atrocity must be exposed and condemned by all. Every fascist act and its perpetrators must be made to answer for their crimes.

In waging antifeudal and antifascist struggles, the peasant masses are harnessing power from their organized strength. Peasant associations, together with other rural mass organizations of youth, women, children and cultural activists serve as foundations for building barrio revolutionary committees which are basic units of the people's democratic government. These serve to wage agrarian revolution as well as to take part in armed struggle. From among the

peasant associations arise self-defense units which help enforce policies and ordinances enacted by the local revolutionary committees. Units of the people's militias are built as local units of the NPA to carry out mass guerrilla warfare to wage widespread armed resistance against the rampaging fascist troops of the enemy.

While helping the peasant masses wage mass struggles, the NPA must boldly intensify guerrilla warfare and deliver bigger and more frequent blows against the enemy. It must target the worst of the fascist murderers to punish them for their crimes and puncture their overweening arrogance. The NPA must continually seize tactical initiative. It must apply the tactics of dispersal, shifting and counter-encirclement and concentration to frustrate enemy offensives. It must carry-out well-planned tactical offensives to wipe out isolated and vulnerable units of the enemy and take away their weapons.

By waging widespread peasant mass struggles and advancing the armed revolution, the people and their revolutionary forces will surely surmount and defeat Duterte's brutal war and his scheme for a fascist dictatorship. AB

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19; against a CAA detachment in Barangay Igococ, Sibalom and Barangay Tubudan, San Remegio in the same province on March 24; and against PNP operatives in Barangay Boloc, Tubungan, Iloilo on March 30.

In Eastern Samar, the PNP station in Barangay Poblacion, Motiong, Samar was harassed by the NPA on March 11. A detachment of 87th IB in Barangay Canaponte, San Jose de Buan was also attacked. A police operative was killed while two others were wounded.

Three armed actions were also launched by the NPA-Northern Negros. These include a harassment against the 12th IB-CAFGU in Sitio Pulupangyan, Barangay Bug-ang, Toboso on March 19 and against an AFP unit operating in Sitio Fuentes, Mabini, Escalante City on March 21.

The NPA also disarmed elements of the RPA/SCAA in Sitio Mayana, Barangay Bago, Don Salvador Benedicto on March 21. Five pistols and ammunition were seized

during the attack.

The NPA-North Central Mindanao also launched seven armed actions from March 2 to April 5. Among these is the harassment against the 58th IB in the towns of Salay, Claveria and Lagonglong, Misamis Oriental wherein five soldiers were slain while another was wounded. The NPA also harassed operating troopers of the 23rd IB in Buenavista, Agusan del Norte and of 8th IB in Impasug-ong, Bukidnon wherein one soldier was killed.

On March 15, seven 8th IB troopers were wounded during a demolition operation launched by the NPA in New Tubigon, Barangay Busdi, Malaybalay City. On the same day, the NPA ambushed another unit of the 8th IB in Sitio Magawa, Barangay Bulonay, Impasug-ong wherein one soldier was killed.

The NPA twice paralyzed the operations of Davao Agriventure Corporation in Bukidnon on March 10 and April 15. A shotgun and ammunition were confiscated from the company. AB

NPA50: People's war, until victory

The Central Committee extended its most militant greetings to all Red commanders and fighters on the 50th founding anniversary of the New People's Army.

In its statement, the CPP acknowledged the victories of the NPA in the past five decades of waging armed struggle. The Central Committee paid tribute to all the heroes and martyrs who offered their lives for the revolutionary cause. It also acknowledged the contribution of veteran Red fighters who served and continue to support the armed struggle.

Simultaneously, various regional NPA units and underground mass organizations also issued statements in honor of the celebration and to put forward the call to further advance the people's war.

Ka Ariel Montero of NPA-Northeastern Mindanao Region, in his statement, highlighted the victories achieved by the NPA in the region in the past year. It launched more than 200 armed actions wherein 27 high-powered firearms were seized.

Meanwhile, the NPA-North Central Mindanao Region was able to conduct 120 armed actions wherein 124 and 93 AFP elements were killed and wounded, respectively. Ka Norcen Mangubat of the Regional Party Committee in NCMR said that the people's armed struggle will never be defeated and will continue to overcome any focused sustained operation of the AFP.

The Regional Party Committee in Negros slammed AFP's bragging of the arrest of Fr. Frank Fernandez and Cleofe Lagtapon. Negrosanons and the Filipino people hate the AFP all the more for this, it said.

It also pledged to uphold justice for the victims of the regime's fas-

cists attacks in the island, including the massacre victims in Sagay and those victimized by its Oplan Sauron/SEMPO.

The Regional Party Committee in Panay reported that the AFP suffered no less than 50 casualties last year. Red fighters in the region were challenged to overcome their weaknesses to further advance the people's war.

The NPA-Eastern Visayas condemned the reactionary regime for perpetrating relentless attacks and brutal killings in the region. No less than 15 victims of political killings and thousands of forced evacuation due to militarization were recorded in Samar and Leyte.

The Regional Party Committee in Southern Tagalog called on the people to struggle to overthrow the US-Duterte regime and defy its fascist and tyrannical scheme.

Ka Cleo del Mundo offered a Red salute to all NPA commanders and fighters for launching armed actions that shook the Southern Luzon Command of the AFP and the local ruling class in 2018. The Red fighters were able to confiscate high-powered firearms, destroy armaments of the 85th IB and deal blows against the enemy last year.

The Regional Party Committee in Cagayan Valley stated that the people's army continues to enjoy the support of the masses as its struggles are founded on the national and democratic aspirations of the people.

It further stated that the NPA is



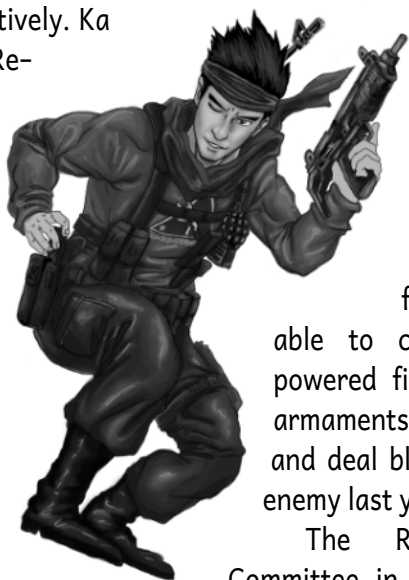
already operating in around 500 barrios in 60 towns in 6 provinces across Cagayan Valley. In the past two years, the Red fighters were able to conduct 52 tactical offensives wherein high-powered rifles, pistols and other armaments were seized. Its mass base is also continuously expanding.

According to Ka Filiw of Cordillera People's Democratic Front, the revolutionary movement plays a significant role in advancing the national minorities' right to self-determination and the overall democratic cause.

The people will forever treasure the NPA for mounting campaigns anti-social activities in their communities, for helping resolve intertribal conflicts peacefully, and for punishing plunderous and destructive mining companies operating in the region.

In solidarity with the celebration of the golden anniversary, the NDF-Metro Manila held a lightning rally last March 25. The Kabataang Makabayan in Ilocos and Panay and the Liga ng Agham para sa Bayan also mounted series of discussions, slogan-painting and postering in the whole month of March.

Meanwhile, the Christians for National Liberation-Northern Luzon, Kabataang-Makabayan-Southern Tagalog and the Communist Party of the French State also issued solidarity statements to the NPA. A celebration was also held at the office of the NDFP in Amsterdam, the Netherlands on March 31. AB



Farmers from Cagayan and Capiz gain victories

FARMERS FROM MAAYON, Capiz gained victories from a dialogue with eight financiers (merchant-usurers) last March 26. Around 250 Maayon farmers participated in the dialogue which was organized by the Kahublagaan sang mga Mangunguma kag Mamumugon sa Uma sa Capiz (Kammaca), a provincial chapter of Pamanggas-Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas.

Among the most notable victories of the farmers is the reduction of monthly loan interest rates from 6-8% to 5%. Simultaneously, the farmers demanded that financiers buy their products at prices set in town centers. As some financiers did not sign agreement, the farmers demanded that another round of talks be held. Local government election candidates witnessed the dialogue and vowed to help the farmers as much as they could.

The farmers first held a dialogue on October 2018 to demand

the reduction of monthly loan interest rates to 3% within four months, the cancellation of loan interests during calamities, and the setting of prices of their products based on prices in town centers.

Meanwhile, farmers from Cagayan were able to demand that loan interests be written-off during calamities, after 800 farmers from Baggao and nearby towns of Gattaran, Amulong, Alcala and Sto. Niño held a dialogue with seven financiers last March 15 in San Jose, Baggao. The dialogue was organized by the

Baggao Farmers Association (BFA).

The agreement stipulates that financiers will not collect interest payments if crops are damaged by 50% or more due to a calamity. The BFA presented a comparative analysis of the farmers' costs of production and their profits, showing their losses even during fair weather.

Despite this, the coverage of the agreement was not agreed upon by the farmers and financiers. The farmers demanded that it should cover September 2018 as this was when Typhoon Ompong severely hit Baggao. The financiers insisted the agreement would cover only future calamities. Msgr. Gerry Perez acted as mediator in the dialogue while members of the Sangguniang Bayan of Baggao served as observers. **AB**

State forces arrest 2 NDF consultants

TWO CONSULTANTS of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) and three others were successively arrested by the US-Duterte regime last March.

In a joint operation, elements of the 202nd IBde and the Philippine National Police (PNP) arrested Fr. Frank Fernandez, 71, NDF-Negros spokesperson, his wife Cleofe Lagtapon, 66 and Geann Perez, 20 last March 25 in Liliw, Laguna.

The three were charged with fabricated cases of illegal possession of firearms and explosives on top of murder charges against Fernandez and Lagtapon. Fernandez is suffering from severe heart and lung ailments while Lagtapon has leukemia, the reason for their stay in the area.

Meanwhile, Renante Gamarra, another NDF consultant, and his companion, Fr. Arturo Joseph Balagat, were arrested in Imus, Cavite last March 20. They were brought to Camp General Pantaleon Garcia in Imus, Cavite then

transferred to Camp Bagong Diwa in Taguig City after several days. They were charged with illegal possession of firearms. Last March 23, the court dropped the charges against them.

The NDFP negotiating panel was not surprised with Rodrigo Duterte's cancellation of appointments of the GRP negotiating panel headed by Silvestre Bello III last March 18. Duterte has since unilaterally ended the peace negotiations with NDFP when it released Proclamation 360 last November 23, 2018.

According to Jose Maria Sison, Duterte showed no interest in the negotiations and instead outrightly used the armed conflict as a pretext to justify martial law in Mindanao, and railroad the charter change to realize his ambition to become a fascist dictator.

Seven NDFP consultants have already been illegally arrested, six of whom are still in detention. **AB**

Youth group oppose Mandatory ROTC

PROGRESSIVE YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS mounted successive protests condemning the brutal killing of Willie Amihoy, a Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) cadet in the Iloilo State College of Fisheries. The protesters said that ROTC reinforces bullying and violence among students.

Various youth groups in UP Cebu and Kabataan Partylist-Panay also conducted protests on March 12 and 13, respectively, to condemn the killing. In Metro Manila, students from University of the East, Pamantasan ng Lunsod ng Maynila, and Far Eastern University (FEU) staged a candle-lighting ceremony in front of the latter to oppose the proposal to implement mandatory ROTC. Similar protest actions were also launched in other universities across Metro Manila.

Meanwhile, various student organizations in UP Los Baños, Laguna condemned the Armed Forces of the Philippines for conducting a forum wherein legal and progressive youth organizations were tagged as communist fronts. A similar forum was conducted by the AFP in UP Tacloban on March 10, wherein the Pulso han Mag-aaram student alliance was likewise Red-tagged. **AB**

Raise rice, onion and copra farmgate prices!

FARMGATE PRICES of palay, onion and other local agricultural products continued to decline during the first quarter of 2019. This is due to the unimpeded importation of these products under trade liberalization.

Local palay prices were at P14/kilo in March, down from more or less P20/kilo last year. This is a direct consequence of the newly-enacted law on the liberalization of rice importation.

This will further impoverish farmers as local production costs (including seeds and pesticides), as well as land rent, remain high. Their plight will be further aggravated by the drought which is already devastating many rice-producing provinces.

In Nueva Ecija, the top onion-producing province, farmers' produce are bought at P12-P15/kilo only. According to farmers, production costs reach up to P130,000 per hectare. To profit, they need to sell their yield at P30/kilo at least, or double the current price. More than 21,000 farmers grow onions on about 11,500 hectares of land in the area.

Meanwhile, in a dialogue with officials of the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) last March 4, peasants from Southern Tagalog demanded that copra and coconut prices be raised, as well as wages

of farm workers in coconut plantations. According to coconut farmers, the PCA should set copra prices at P50/kilo at the barrio level in the CALABARZON area, which is equal to copra prices in the region's town centers such as Lucena City. They insisted that prices of whole coconuts be raised to P12/piece and farm wages to P300/day or for every 1,000 pieces of harvested coconut. They also demanded food aid for peasants most affected by low copra prices.

This year, copra prices in the region are at P12/kilo only or 66% lower compared to P38/kilo in 2017. Whole coconuts are bought at P3.60 to P4.70 per piece. Farm workers in coconut plantations earn P4-P7/day. There are around 20 million coconut farmers in the entire country.

In a related news, farmers protested in front of the Department of Agrarian Reform in Quezon City last March 21 to denounce expansion of plantations in the country. Instead of addressing the farmers' need to increase production, the government is selling agricultural lands to foreign companies. **AB**

Marawi residents rally against TFBM

NEARLY A THOUSAND Marawi residents marched and staged a rally at the Provincial Capitol Gymnasium on March 20 to condemn the two-year delayed implementation of the city rehabilitation program by Task Force Bangon Marawi (TFBM). The action was mounted in conjunction with the conduct of a dialogue between the TFBM and the residents.

They lambasted TFBM's inaction and challenged its chair, Eduardo del Rosario, to resign for failing to address the residents' plight. The residents demanded that they be consulted and their demand to return to city be acted upon.

To hinder residents from returning, the TFBM claims that there are still unexploded bombs in the most affected area (MAA).

Hafsah Bint Amer Hassan, a Marawi resident, expressed his anger against TFBM. He said that two years have passed but the TFBM is yet to finish listing and categorizing residents. The rehabilitation of Boracay was prioritized more than that of their community, he added. The residents also complained against the illegal demolition of remaining houses in the MAA after the siege. **AB**

PROTEST VS. CYBER-ATTACKS. Various alternative media groups, digital rights activists and their supporters marked the World Day Against Cyber-Censorship last March 12 with a protest action in front of the Department of Information and Communications Technology.

The protesters condemned the agency's inaction over the demand of the groups to address the attacks on their websites, and said that that this pushes them to believe that the offensives are sanctioned by the regime. Millions of pesos are spent on funding the simultaneous attacks to take down or block the said websites. Alternative media groups already filed a case against the company behind the attacks.

PROTEST VS. OIL PRICE HIKES. Valenzuela City residents participated in a protest action spearheaded by Defend Job Philippines in front of the Shell gasoline station in General T. De Leon on March 19. The group criticized the successive oil price increases in the past seven weeks which have resulted in higher prices of basic commodities and further impoverish the people. Amid this and the drought currently experienced across the country, the regime was compelled to admit that prices will further increase in the coming months.

PROTESTS VS. ILLEGAL TERMINATION. In Laguna, members of the Kaisahan ng mga Manggagawang Ilegal na Tinanggal sa Cabuyao staged a picket protest last March 17 to culminate their 2nd congress. Along with the Southern Tagalog Labor Vote Alliance, they called on the people to vote wisely this coming election.

Meanwhile, over 100 workers of Holcim Philippines Inc., Davao Plant protested on March 4 after they were laid off by their contractor Fort Steel Cargo Integrators Inc. despite the issuance of a regularization by the Department of Labor and Employment.

State forces kill 14 farmers within a day

Police and military forces successively killed 14 farmers just within a few hours on March 30 in Negros Oriental. The victims add to the seven farmers killed from December 2018 to January under the campaign of suppression dubbed as SEMPO. Starting from 1 a.m., the latest killings were perpetrated in Canlaon City and the towns of Sta. Catalina ang Manjuyod. Eight were killed in Canlaon City, four in Manjuyod and two in Sta. Catalina.

Leonora, wife of victim Ismael Avelino, recounted that they were roused from their sleep at around 2:30 a.m. when at least six armed men with faces covered barged into their house. Leonora and her two young children were dragged outside, while Ismael was left inside with both hands raised. Afterwards, gunshots from inside the house were heard, as well as from their neighbor where Ismael's elder brother Edgardo was simultaneously killed.

Ismael and Edgardo were both members of Hugpong Kusog Mag-uuma sa Canlaon-Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas, which was being headed by the elder Avelino.

In Franklin Lariosa's case, the police surrounded his house at around 5 a.m. and presented a search warrant for an M16 rifle. Lariosa was brought outside his house, where his wife and family waited for him. When Lariosa denied that he was hiding a rifle, the police shot him thrice. The culprits also stopped Lariosa's mother who rushed to his aid.

Following the bloody operations, the Philippine National Police (PNP) bragged about its Synchronized Enhanced Management of Police Operations (SEMPO). Those killed were pre-

sented as partisan operatives and supporters of the New People's Army (NPA). Aside from them, around 12 other civilians were arrested in the said operations and were charged with trumped-up cases. The PNP presented planted firearms and explosives as evidence.

The SEMPO (also called Oplan Sauron) is the Duterte regime's current fascist scheme in its attack against the people of Negros island. Among its salient features are the "shock and awe" tactics and synchronized besieging of targeted barangays; utilizing municipal offices to put up checkpoints and file charges against those arrested; premeditated killings and arrests; continuous issuance of arrest and search warrants, including signed blank warrants for whoever the police and military wish to arrest or

kill.

Although the PNP is at the forefront of SEMPO, it abides by the command of the Armed Forces of the Philippines Central Command (AFP Centcom). The Centcom is currently headed by Lt. Gen. Noel Clement, a notorious rabid follower of Jovito Palparan.

In preparation for SEMPO, the military and police campaigned for fake surrenders in July-August 2018. The massacre in Sagay and the killing of the victims' lawyer were carried out in October. Following this, two enemy battalions pursued the farmers who conducted collective farming in Sagay. The repositioning of troops in Negros Oriental was also completed in November 2018.

The AFP used "peace and development" operations in barrios to map out houses of suspected supporters or families of Red fighters, as well as members of legal peasant organizations tagged as "communist fronts." The list of those to be arrested and killed was based on these data.

The first wave of SEMPO was carried out in Guihulngan City on December 27, 2018. Simultaneous operations were conducted in Mabinay and Santa Catalina. On that day, five farmers were killed in Guihulngan City and more than 20 were illegally arrested in the said towns. This number ballooned to seven killed and 57 illegally arrested when operations continued until the second week of

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NEGROS

Canlaon

ISMAEL AVELINO
EDGARDO AVELINO
MELCHOR PAÑARES
MARIO PAÑARES
ROGELIO RICOMUNO
RICKY RICOMUNO
GONZALO ROSALES
GENES PALMARES

Manjuyod

VALENTIN ACABAL
SONNY PALAGTIW
STEVE ARAPOC
MANULO MARTIN

Sta. Catalina

ANOJ RAPADA
FRANKLIN LARIOSA

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January and spread out to the towns of Canlaon, Moises Padilla, Isabela and La Castellana. (Read more details in Ang Bayan, January 7 and February 21, 2019.) Up to 3,000 personnel were employed by the AFP and PNP for this operation.

In accordance with the "whole-of-nation approach" of Duterte's campaign of suppression, the AFP Centcom utilize courts in issuing warrants and filing of charges. Under SEMPO's first wave, all 119 search warrants were signed by Judge Soliver Peras of the Regional Trial Court 7 in Cebu.

The AFP likewise made use of local government facilities in transporting soldiers and policemen, despite concealing the operation from local government units. Even the governor of Negros Oriental denied that he was informed of the latest SEMPO operations.

The SEMPO resulted in the forcible evacuation of residents, destruction of their crops and theft of their cash and properties by operating troops of the military and police. Because of this, landlords in the island were emboldened to create and beef up their private armies and goons.

The AFP and PNP's brutality was met with widespread condemnation from mass organizations of peasants, the religious, media and even agencies of the reactionary government. In Iloilo City, a protest against the AFP and PNP's bloody operations was mounted by Bayan and Anakpawis in front of Camp Delgado on April 1.

COASTAL CLEAN-UP. Environmental groups including Nilad and Earth Island Institute Philippines, along with PAMALAKAYA and Baseco People's Alliance, conducted a coastal-clean up drive in Baseco, Manila last March 18. They opposed the pro-foreign and pro-capitalist Manila Bay Reclamation Project. **AB**

7 more peasants killed

In other parts of the country, the US-Duterte regime continues to wage all-out attacks against peasants. In March alone, seven were killed by state elements.

Soliders of the 48th IB murdered Larry Suganob, leader of PINAGBUKLOD, an affiliate organization of Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), last March 18 at Barangay San Isidro, San Jose del Monte, Bulacan. Suganob was active in the farmers' local struggle against landgrabbing of the Ayalas and the Central Bank of the Philippines. Members of the 48th IB were operating in the area during the murder.

In Davao del Norte, a Lumad student was shot-dead in Sitio Milyon, Barangay Sto. Niño, Talaingod last March 15. A drunk element of the Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU) indiscriminately fired shots in the community shooting Jerome Pangadas on the head, resulting in his immediate death. According to reports, Balentin ran amok after residents of Sitio Milyon refused to join the CAFGU. Pangadas, aged 15 years old, was a student of Salugpongan Ta 'Tanu Igkanogon Community Learning Center. Another resident was wounded during the incident.

Similarly, a peasant from Bongabong, Oriental Mindoro was killed by the 203rd IBde and PNP-MIMAROPA. The military made it appear that Roland Sibulan died in an encounter between the AFP and NPA last March 2 even if he was actually arrested in a checkpoint and tortured on March 1.

His grandchild was also held at gunpoint. Sibulan has left the NPA for more than a decade already.

Last March 5, Sibulan's nephew, Onad was also arrested at the same checkpoint, tortured and threatened to be killed by soliders. He was released after six hours of mental and physical torture. His cousin was able to flee and escape the torture.

Soldiers of the 71st IB shot three young civilians last March 28 in Sitio Mangurayan, Barangay Anitapan, Mabini, Compostela Valley. Franklin Tirol, his cousin, Zaldy Tirol and another were just looking for frogs and hunting in the forest, with nothing

but flashlights and improvised guns when they were attacked.

Franklin and Zaldy immediately died while their cousin was severely wounded and illegally arrested. The 71st IB claimed that the victims were members of the NPA, and armed with military equipment and an improvised explosive device. They also made it appear that a soldier was wounded in the incident.

Last March 30, Uming Caliho, a peasant-leader from Sitio Kalibunlibunan, Barangay Pinagturi-lan, Sta. Cruz, Occidental Mindoro was murdered.

Meanwhile, in Samar, James Viñas, 75, a former leader of People Surge was shot dead in front of his home in Borongan City last March 12 at 7 p.m. **AB**



Repression against peasants and minorities

Three peasants were illegally arrested in Barangay Mulangan, Igaras, Iloilo last March 18. The three were identified as Roberto Elamparo, 50, Ruperto Enar, 51 and Ramon Enar, 49. The AFP claimed that an encounter ensued near the area and accused the three as members of the NPA.

In Iloilo, three Tumandok minorities were also illegally arrested in Alimodias, Miag-ao by elements of the 61st IB last March 24 and were accused of being NPA members. They were identified as Rolando Mediana, his son Rolando Jr., and Freddie Nabua. They were arrested after an encounter occurred between the AFP and NPA in Sitio Baruk at 4 a.m. on the same day. Ramonito Sabug, the barangay captain, was able to take custody of the three after asserting that they are residents of the said barangay.

In Aurora, the AFP has not yet surfaced Diodicto Miñoza, a peasant-leader and coconut farmer from Barangay Ditumabo, San Luis. Miñoza protested against the planned construction of hydropower dams in the communities of San Luis and Gabaldon in Nueva Ecija. He was last contacted by his wife on March 22. Residents went to his hut the next day only to find it ransacked. They also saw prints of combat shoes in the vicinity. Soldiers of the 91st IB are currently operating in the barangay.

In Agusan del Norte, elements of the PNP and 23rd IB surrounded and then raided the residence of Deliza Camanian in Crazer, Aklan, Nasipit last March 8. Deliza's daughter, Glenn Ann, was wounded due to the violent entry of the soldiers and police.

On the same day, the 23rd IB put up a tarpaulin in Afga, Buenavista, Agusan del Norte wherein faces of those accused as NPA members were posted. The following day, Fredo Dabidi, Loreto Mapoy, Arnel Toledo and other civilian residents of Barangay

Lower Olave, Buenavista were summoned and interrogated by the soldiers. The victims were detained in the military camp.

The 23rd IB claimed that an encounter between the AFP and NPA took place in Afga that same afternoon. Soldiers indiscriminately fired at ten houses in the community.

In Palawan, agents of the Provincial Mining Regulatory Board evicted peasants from their farmlands at Sitio Sta. Cruz, Barangay Decalachao, Coron last March 30. This is to pave way for the expansion of the Busuanga Airport located at the 40,000-hectare Yulo King Ranch.

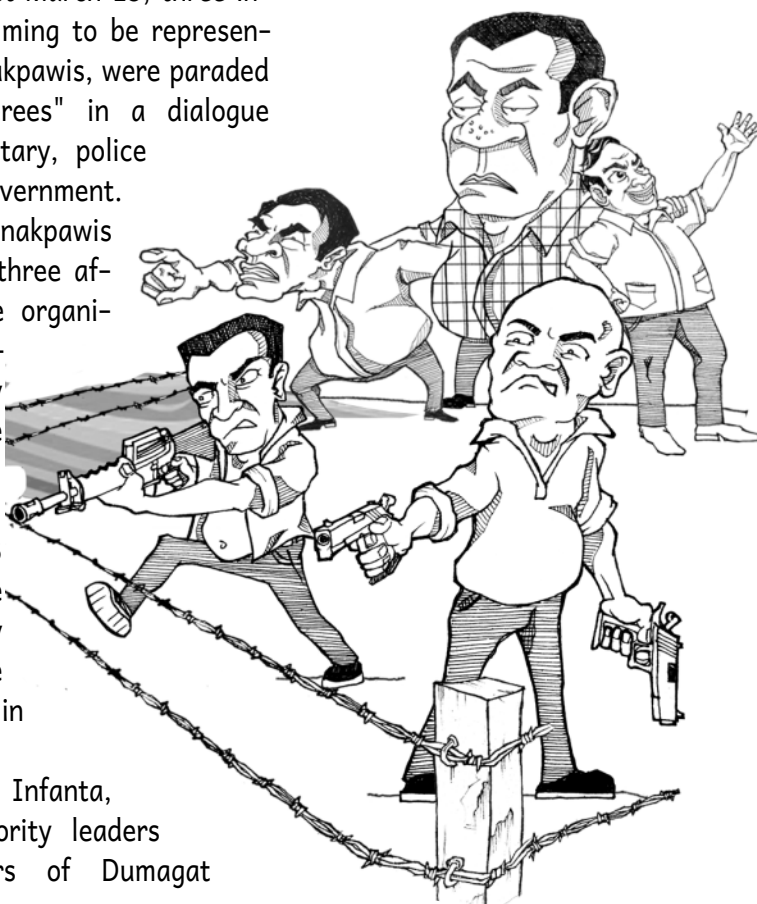
Red-tagging by elements of the 17th IB, PNP and the local government of Cagayan against Anakpawis and peasant organizations continue unabated. Last March 13, three individuals, claiming to be representatives of Anakpawis, were paraded as "surrenderees" in a dialogue with the military, police and local government. Early on, Anakpawis expelled the three after using the organization to extort money from the peasants.

Elements of the 80th IB aboard three 6x6 military trucks were deployed in Barangay Magsaysay, Infanta, Quezon. Minority leaders and members of Dumagat

Sierra Madre-TK were threatened and harassed by the soldiers. Due to extreme nervousness, Ponce Adornado, a Dumagat minority, died. The Dumagats are opposing the construction of the Kaliwa-Kanan Laiban Dam that will certainly destroy their communities.

For the first time, the reactionary state used the Human Security Act to convict Lumad leader Datu Jomorito Goaynon as a "terrorist," in a hearing last March 11 in Misamis Oriental. Goaynon, a leader of Lumad organization Kalumbay, was illegally arrested, along with peasant leader Irene Udarbe, at a checkpoint mounted by the 65th IB last January 28.

Last March 20, Gabriela member Mae Tugot was illegally arrested and detained at the detachment of 1st Special Forces Battalion in Mampayag, Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon. She was arrested by the military in Macabalan, Cagayan de Oro City. AB



AFP lays siege on 12 Bukidnon communities

FIVE BATTALIONS of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) are currently conducting focused operations in 12 communities situated in the boundaries of Cabanglasan and San Fernando, Bukidnon since January this year. No less than 1,400 soldiers from the 60th IB, 56th IB, 57th IB, 58th IB, 88th IB, Scout Rangers and Division Reconnaissance Company are currently operating in the area. Early on, the said communities have been bombed, shelled and strafed since the last quarter of 2018.

Among those covered by the focused operations is Sitio Tapayanon, an remote community with more than 400 residents.

In a desperate attempt to quell the struggle of Lumads in Tapayanon, the AFP paraded residents and minority leaders as communist surrenderees last March. The 60th IB now utilizes the community as a showcase of a "successful" E-CLIP implementation.

In 2016, the AFP has closed down the Lumad school run by the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines (RMP) in Tapayanon. This is the biggest Lumad school in Bukidnon which had more than a hundred students in literacy and numeracy.

Since 2017, residents been opposing two major road projects in the area—the Laak-San Fernando and Mactan-Miaray roads—as these will encroach on their ancestral communities.

In truth, the community is being hamletted by the military. Residents' mobility and the entry of food and other supplies are restricted, and they were prevented from tending their farms. Their leaders are also subjected harassment and are barred from coordinating their situation outside the community.

As a result, more than 150 families from adjacent communities were compelled to evacuate and camp out in Malaybalay City since the 2nd week of March. AB

300 families evacuate in Samar

MORE THAN 300 families or 1,409 individuals evacuated from Hagbay, Canaponte, San Nicolas and San Pedro in San Jose de Buan, Samar on March 17-25 due to the three-month long operation of the 87th IB in their communities. Among the evacuees are 424 children, 66 elderly individuals and 11 pregnant women.

Last March 25, soldiers and agents of the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) coerced the residents to attend a "peace rally" and be presented as "surrenderees." The residents, however, refused and instead protested to demand the immediate pull-out of military troops from their communities.

After the protest, elements of the 87th IB looked for Jade Cinco, representative of People's Surge-Western Samar.

Meanwhile, 21 days after the homecoming of 1,607 Lumad evacuees in Barangay Diatagon, Lianga, 28 families from Sitio Decoy and Panukmoan were again compelled to evacuate to Km. 9 due to the shelling, aerial bombardment and strafing by the military in their communities. The bombings were perpetrated by the 401st IBde last March 31 a day after an encounter between the AFP and NPA ensued in a nearby community.

Diatagon residents evacuated last July 2018 due to intense military operations in the area. AB

PNP arrests union leader

POLICE FORCES illegally arrested Eugene Garcia, chairperson of the workers union in Pioneer Flat Glass Manufacturing, in Pasig City last March 20. He was charged with a fabricated case of illegal possession of firearms. Upon presenting a search warrant, the police searched through and then planted a .45 caliber pistol in his residence. Last 2016, 44 workers, including union leaders, were illegally dismissed by the company while CBA negotiations were still ongoing.

Last March 30, three soldiers arrested Zandro Esteban, a Sumifru worker and member of NAMSUFANAFLU-KMU, in Barangay San Jose, Compostela and was brought to a military camp in New Bataan, Compostella Valley.

In a related news, the PNP threatened to disperse the picketline of Sumifru workers in Manila City which they put up last year.

Police forces harassed the family of Ricky Chavez, a member of the union in Toyota, last March 21. The operatives entered their residence upon presenting a search warrant. According to his wife, the police attempted to plant a gun in the house to be used as evidence to arrest the unionist.

Meanwhile, two members of the Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap (Kadamay) in Pandi, Bulacan were arrested last March 25 based on trumped-up charges of illegal possession of firearms. AB

Water privatization is a bane to Metro Manila residents

Half a million residents suffered a limited six- to 18-hour supply of water per day for almost two weeks last month. Although water supply is gradually stabilizing, water supply interruptions are expected to continue in the coming months.

People bear the brunt of inefficient water distribution services under greedy private operators. This experience directly contradicts the promise that privatization will result in "more efficient and affordable services." This is a vivid manifestation of how neoliberal policies, advocated by the reactionary state, negatively affect the people.

Inefficient services

Water distribution infrastructures controlled by large companies are in poor condition and inadequate. Despite ample water supply in Angat Dam, almost 300,000 Metro Manila residents are already without access to water services. On March, almost half a million suffered the same.

Water service provision in Metro Manila is duopolized by Manila Water

and Maynilad, which operate in the east and west zone respectively. The concession agreement states that Manila Water will get 40% (1,600 MLD or million liters/day) of Angat's raw water and Maynilad the remaining 60% (2,400 MLD).

Manila Water is claiming that its 1,600 MLD from Angat is insufficient as the demand in its service area already rose to 1,750 MLD. This, however, is a mere subterfuge to conceal the fact that it is wasting about 176 MLD due to its defective water distribution and storage facilities. This is, in fact, higher than the 150-MLD deficit that is being blamed as the root of the so-called water crisis.

If water losses from Maynilad (1,001 MLD) were to be accounted for, total wastage from both concessionaires due to defective infrastruc-

tures is at 1,177 MLD (or 785% of the said deficit). Based on targets set under the privatization concession, the volume of water losses should have already been reduced to around 732 to 976 MLD as early as 2001. Instead of the the promised reduction, wastage has further increased as a result of the concessionaires' failure to repair their pipelines and address the leakages.

Even data by the reactionary government belie the much hyped water supply "shortage." In fact, Angat Dam has been reported to have as much as 1,200 MLD in unutilized capacity.

Profit-hungry

Water concessionaires are not interested in ensuring public welfare but in extracting superprofits through their services. There is ample water supply but storage and distribution infrastructures remain

"Water..." continued on page 12

Attacks on offices and a mission

TWENTY SOLDIERS attempted to enter the BAYAN-Northern Mindanao Region office in Camaman-an, Cagayan de oro City last March 20 purportedly to arrest a certain "Albert." When they were refused entry, the soldiers surrounded the house and prohibited the staff members to leave the office.

On the same day, the office of KASTAN, the provincial chapter of the Cordillera Peoples Alliance in Abra, located at Barangay Lipcan Ubbog, Bangued was ransacked.

Meanwhile, members of Karapatan-Quezon were harrassed and threatened last March 9 at two military checkpoints in barangays San Francisco and Dao. More than 50 elements of the 58th IB and CAFGU searched the delegates' personal belongings. The delegates were on their way to Lopez, Quezon to conduct an investigation in a community where a firefight between the AFP and NPA took place last March 8.

Members of the International Delegation of Lawyers probing attacks against their Filipino counterparts were themselves brazenly subjected to surveillance and harassment by state intelligence agents. An agent took pictures and videos and snooped on the delegates' conversations. Agents even tailed them to their hotel. .

The international delegation was composed of nine lawyers from Belgium, Italy, Japan, Korea, The Netherlands and United States. The investigation, conducted on March 14-17, looked into the incidents of attacks against the sector, includ-

ing the killing of Atty. Benjamin Ramos and the Red-tagging of NUPL-Panay members. According to their findings, the killings of lawyers and prosecutors are interrelated and are a consequence of Duterte's diatribes against the sector.

A day before the investigation, Atty. Rex Jasper Lopez was shot-dead in front of a mall in Tagum City, Davao del Norte. According to National Union of People's Lawyers (NUPL), Lopez was the 38th lawyer killed under the US-Duterte regime.

Attacks on lawyers, human rights defenders and the people will surely heighten with the withdrawal of the government of the Philippines from the International Criminal Court, NUPL added. The withdrawal took effect last March 17. AB

Group demands release of funds for drought

THIS YEAR, 11 Mindanao provinces will experience drought (Zamboanga del Norte, Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga Sibugay, Misamis Occidental, South Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Dinagat Islands, Surigao del Norte, Maguindanao, Sulu at Tawi-Tawi), alongside 26 provinces in Luzon (Abra, Benguet, Kalinga, Apayao, Mountain Province, Ilocos Norte, La Union, Pangasinan, Bataan, Nueva Ecija, Zambales, Metro Manila, Cavite, Laguna, Quezon, Marinduque, Occidental Mindoro, Oriental Mindoro, Romblon, Palawan, Albay, Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur, Catanduanes, Masbate at Sorsogon). Thirteen Visayas provinces will also experience drought (Aklan, Antique, Capiz, Guimaras, Iloilo, Negros Occidental, Negros Oriental, Siquijor, Biliran, Eastern Samar, Leyte, Northern Samar at Samar).

The Department of Agriculture (DA) reported at the end of March that P4.35-billion worth of crops have already been damaged, with a P2.69-billion damage to palay (un-husked rice) and a P1.66-billion damage to corn crops.

Last March, Zamboanga City, Zamboanga Sibugay, Pagadian City,

North Cotabato, Maguindanao, Rizal and Occidental Mindoro already declared a state of calamity. The worth of crop damages in Pagadian, Kidapawan City, North Cotabato at Occidental Mindoro alone has reached P600 million. Ricefields are the most affected areas in these provinces. In Bicol, 79,000 hectares

of rice and corn fields in six provinces are in danger of devastation. This will affect more than 45,000 and 29,000 rice and corn farmers, respectively.

The Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas demanded that local calamity funds be immediately released to mitigate the worsening dry spell. According to the group, the DA's cloud seeding program is insufficient. The group also condemned the National Irrigation Administration's failure to take immediate steps to counter the drought despite being allocated huge funds for free irrigation. During the drought, the government has to support affected farmers through giving food aid and alternative sources of livelihood. **AB**

"Water..." from page 11

insufficient and defective.

Instead of resulting in cheaper services and infrastructure modernization as promised, privatization has burdened the people with skyrocketing water rates despite poor distribution services by the concessionaires. Over the past two decades, water rates and corporate profits have simultaneously and incessantly risen.

Since water privatization in Metro Manila began in 1997, water rates have risen by 879% and 574% for Manila Water and Maynilad customers, respectively.

On the other hand, net incomes of Manila Water and Maynilad increased by 137% and 444%, respectively, from 2007 to 2017 alone. Manila Water's net income further increased by 8% (reaching P6.6 billion) this 2018.

Manila Water is owned and oper-

ated by the Ayala Corporation in partnership with the International Finance Corporation-World Bank (IFC-WB), and other Japanese, Singaporean and British creditors. The same corporation also owns big businesses in other strategic services and industries including banking, telecommunications, power distribution and transportation among others.

On the other hand, Maynilad was formerly owned by the Lopez family and is now owned and operated by Manny V. Pangilinan in partnership with the Salim/Metro Pacific Investment Corporation (MPIC) of Indonesia and other Japanese and French creditors. He also owns giant businesses in other services and industries including mining, power distribution and telecommunications among others.

Imperialist design

The Metropolitan Waterworks

and Sewerage System (MWSS) was privatized by the Ramos regime in 1997 in compliance with the policy recommendations of the IFC (private investment arm of the WB). The people were promised that this will result in adequate and cheaper water rates.

However, the concession agreement was actually designed by the WB-IFC to ensure that local capitalists will be able to operate profitably in order to pay MWSS' \$800-million debt from the WB, Asian Development Bank and Japan Bank for International Cooperation, to the detriment of the people's welfare.

The Duterte regime is shamelessly using the concocted water supply shortage to railroad the construction of the Kaliwa Dam by Chinese investors which will result in the displacement of more than 20,000 indigenous people from their

"Water..." continued on pg. 13



US military presence in the Philippines escalates

AMERICAN MILITARY PRESENCE and operations—under the guise of joint military exercises, port calls, visits and other activities—are escalating in the Philippines. Last March, at least 9,000 American troops were simultaneously on Philippine soil.

This April 2 to 12, the US is launching the 35th Balikatan in South and Central Luzon. This is being directly managed by the Operation Pacific Eagle-Philippines and is participated by 3,500 American soldiers and 4,000 Filipino soldiers. American participants have been coming to the country since March 17. This almost coincided with the 15th Pacific Partnership conducted from March 10-24 in Eastern Visayas which was participated by 1,600 American soldiers. This was on top of the Exercise Salaknib conducted in Nueva Ecija from March 4 to 14. The said training exercises are part of the 280 military activities the US is set to launch in the country this year.

Alongside these trainings is the docking of the USS Blue Ridge, the US Navy's commanding ship, in Manila Bay on March 14. The ship, which contains 3,000 American soldiers, is

considered a military base at sea.

In addition to this, the US has opened Philippine territory to other foreign armies using the previously bilateral Balikatan. Australian soldiers have participated in this exercise since 2012. The US also included armies from Japan, South Korea, East Timor, Brunei, Thailand, Singapore, and United Kingdom in the guise of "observing." Balikatan is particularly important to the US since only five countries in the Pacific, the US' widest military region, currently allow presence of American troops. Particular to the AFP, the newly organized and US-funded 1st Brigade Combat Team supposedly under the local Special Operations Command, participated in the Balikatan.

As in the past, the US is using these trainings to launch various military operations. It uses humanitarian work such as school constructions,

medical missions, education and literacy and others to justify the entry of foreign troops into farflung barrios in various parts of the country. This year, they supposedly constructed school buildings in Batangas and Leyte.

This all came to pass after Michael Pompeo, US Department of State secretary, visited the Philippines last February 28. Pompeo dropped by the country to answer the fuss Duterte and his officials created to "review" the Mutual Defense Treaty, the military treaty which allows US troops in the country. Duterte supposedly wanted the new treaty to include Philippine sovereign territories in the South China Sea.

In truth, Duterte and his officials only created the clamor to allow the US to increase the military aid and matériel it is dumping in the country. In particular, Duterte is running after the sale of thousands of high-powered rifles which the US Senate blocked due to the regime's bloody drug war. AB

"Water..," from page 12

ancestral lands in Sierra Madre.

People's struggles

Amid intensifying attacks against the right to efficient water services, the people should amplify their call to repeal the neoliberal policy of privatization which was implemented by the reactionary state to the benefit of both local and foreign capitalists. The Duterte regime has to be directly held accountable for failing to ensure sufficient and affordable water for the people and penalize the water concessionaires for their inefficient service.

In conjunction with the water supply interruption, residents carrying water buckets and pails protested in front of the MWSS office on March 12 and 15. A similar protest action was mounted by workers led by the Kilusang Mayo Uno at the Welcome Rotonda in Quezon City on March 14.

In a related news, national minorities spearheaded by SANDUGO protested in front of the Chinese Embassy in Makati City on March 14 to lambast projects that will destroy the environment and mire the country in debt including the Chico and Kaliwa Dams. AB

Resist Oplan Samadhan—CPI-Maoist

The Communist Party of India (CPI)-Maoist called on the Indian people to resist the Operation Samadhan ("solution" in Indian), the reactionary Indian state's latest suppression campaign. Contrary to its declared objectives, the operation will not bring in "solutions" such as irrigation, education, health and other services to Indian communities. Instead, Operation Samadhan will displace the people from lands targeted by foreign companies for megadams. The operation covers Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Odisha, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand which are all *adivasi* or minority areas.

The reactionary state is considering the CPI-Maoist as an "internal threat" as a pretext to dump security forces and militarize the said areas. The CPI-Maoist, however, stated that it is not the communists who are threats to the community but the foreign companies and the state security forces that they use.

In fact, there have been communities which have been displaced in the name of "industrialization" and "development." The state accused residents of being members of the CPI-Maoist and were charged with sedition and other trumped-up charges. Thus, they have been forced to abandon their communities to escape police and military abuses. This includes massacres, killings, rape, beatings and other abuses. AB