

EDITORIAL

New stage of US domination after Marcos-Biden meet

The recent Marcos visit and meeting with US president Biden cemented the US strategy of using the Philippines as its military outpost in the Asia-Pacific. This forms part of its intensified imposition to strengthen its hegemony through expanded military presence in the region. It also serves as a historical juncture in reinforcing the status of the Philippines as a US semicolony.

The visit comes a few weeks after Marcos completely acceded to the US plan to build four more (in

addition to the existing five) military bases under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), and a few days after the US military held the Balikatan war exercises in the Philippines in one of the biggest show of force in recent years.

Biden expressed extreme satisfaction with Marcos cooperation with the US geopolitical strategy. He told Marcos, he “couldn’t think of a better partner to have than you.” This is an unequivocal endorsement of Marcos’s fascist

and corrupt regime and support for his brutal war of suppression. In return, Marcos assured the US that the Philippines will serve as one of the key link in the First Island Chain strategy of the US to encircle China and provoke an armed conflict.

During the visit, the Marcos and US governments forged the US-Philippine Bilateral Defense Guidelines (BDG). This reaffirmed the Mutual Defense Treaty, the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), the EDCA and other unequal military agreements. It further ties the Philippines to the foreign and defense policies of the US. Enemies of the US become enemies of the Philippines. This marks further US control and domination of the Philippines. In addition, other agreements and programs were formed that aim to strengthen US domination in the economic and cultural fields.

In the Guidelines, the US reiterates “support for AFP modernization” which long has served to perpetuate Philippine military dependence on the US. This serves US aims of securing the loyalty of military generals through fat kickbacks in government military purchases.

Through this program, the US dumps severely outdated and worn out US military hardware for counterinsurgency.



The Guidelines also aims to “institutionalize defense priorities” to strengthen “interoperability” which means enhancing US command and control of the AFP. The Balikatan exercises and the hundreds of training exercises being conducted by the US and AFP year-round all seek to effectively turn the Philippine military into an adjunct of the US military.

The Marcos visit also served to further propel US dominance over the Philippine economy and aggressively urge American big capitalists to invest and earn profits in the country by exploiting cheap labor and taking advantage of tax-free operations and other Marcos perks. Big bourgeois compradors who accompanied Marcos offered their services as partners for US capitalists, including manufacturers of modular



nuclear reactors to invest and experiment with their untested technology.

The US government also announced plans to spend large amounts of money to expand programs that aim to inculcate the Pax Americana worldview among Filipinos, especially among the Filipino students and youth. Over \$100 million will be spent in the next ten years to expand scholarship programs such as the Fulbright, student exchanges, “youth leadership trainings,” and organizing “friendship societies,” as well as USAID programs for curriculum development, faculty training, educational infrastructure building, and so on. This amount represents globally one of the US’ biggest funding for to expand and intensify its campaign to colonize the minds of the Filipino people.

The Marcos visit to the US was justly condemned by the Filipino people’s patriotic and democratic forces. They exposed Marcos’ subservience to the US and denounced his connivance with the US hegemonic schemes to strengthen and project military power in Asia. They denounced the US for provocations of interimperialist military conflict with China which risk involving the

Philippines into a war against its own interest and putting into danger the Filipino people’s lives and freedom.

The military bases being built by the US in the Philippines under the EDCA, as well as other secret or undisclosed facilities, are gross representations of US intervention and domination. It is rousing the Filipino people’s patriotic outrage. They are becoming even more keen about the long-standing lopsided relationship between the US and the Philippines—one between an imperialist power and a subjugated country, which has existed since the US “granted” the Philippines nominal independence in 1946, after close to half a century of colonial rule.

For close to eight decades now, the Philippines has been a semicolony. In connivance with local big bourgeois compradors and big landlords, US monopoly capitalists have plundered the country’s wealth and resources and condemned the Philippines to a state of economic backwardness and dependence. The neocolonial or semicolonial status of the Philippines has been perpetuated through a slew of disproportionate economic, trade and military agreements and through the force of armed suppression using its client-state.

There is a rising patriotic demand for the abrogation of the MDT, VFA, EDCA, as well as the Bilateral Defense Guidelines and all unequal military treaties, which bind the Philippines to US foreign and war policy.

The Filipino people, especially the Filipino youth, must continue to fight for genuine national freedom and democracy and struggle to put an end to the economic, political, and military status of the Philippines as a US semicolony. They must persevere along the national democratic path of resistance which several generations of Filipinos have marched on, in order to achieve the Filipino people’s aspiration for national and social liberation.

AB

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US builds secret military facilities in Ilocos Norte

American soldiers, together with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), are rushing to build its military bases in Barangay Bobon, Burgos, Ilocos Norte. This location is not among those announced by the Marcos government where the US will build facilities under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA).

The US claimed 30 hectares of land to position 40 howitzer cannons. There are buildings that American soldiers themselves admit are used for monitoring China's military movement. The US is also building a seawall as wide as a road to fortify their base. It is 800 meters long, 15 meters wide, and a foundation four meters high and eight meters deep.

American soldiers behave like rulers over the place. Along with Filipino soldiers, they conducted a 7-day simulation and live-fire exercises in the area from March 16 to 26. Small fisherfolks could not fish during these days. They expressed fear of a clash erupting between US and China forces.

"Our situation is precarious," said one fisherman. "What if we are at sea and then their rockets suddenly start firing?" The "seawall" is also a problem as it blocks their path to the sea.

During military drills in San Joaquin, Sarrat, US forces involved some civilians. "(During training),

we carried American soldiers who pretended to be war casualties," said a resident who was made to take part in the training. "This means during a real war, we will be made to carry American war casualties. Damn, they were heavy!"

Residents witnessed the blatant arrogance of American soldiers. They brag among residents that the facilities they constructed in the military camp serve to surveil the movement of Chinese troops and their rockets. They use their computers to show people their missile network focused on China. Clearly, Ilocos Norte is part of the US's "First Island Chain" strategy against China.

At the same time, the puppet Armed Forces of the Philippines has intensified its presence in the province. Accompanying the US Marines company in Barangay Bobon is the 4th Marine Brigade Landing Battalion (MBLB). This battalion first arrived in Currimao, Ilocos Norte as a Balikatan participant in June 2022.

According to residents, Filipino

and American forces regularly reconnoiter the highway from Tarrag and Balaoi in Pagudpud to Claveria, Cagayan using two six-by-six trucks. Cabungan South in Laoag and Laoag Airport each has a squad of US Marines.

There are also US Marines forces in Currimao, where the Balikatan was previously held. US Marines cunningly established their presence in Sarat town using the pretext of building a health center. All of these villages and towns are on the coast facing the South China Sea.

Whatever charm the American troops adorn themselves with, residents in the affected barangays know the country will be more vulnerable to the horrors of the impending imperialist war.

"Whatever claims of development these American troops bring do not matter if it means the country will face more difficult conditions in the event of a war." This is the response of residents to the alleged mission of "community development" flaunted by American troops.

In fact, the local people were elated after learning that part of the Balikatan Exercises that were scheduled in Ilocos Norte on April 24 was cancelled. AB

Marcos Jr hounded by protests in US

MIGRANT FILIPINOS LED by the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan-USA held successive protests in Washington DC, US, to denounce the visit of Ferdinand Marcos Jr in the country.

On May 1, they staged a protest at the Lafayette Square where Marcos Jr met US President Joe Biden. Following this, protests chased Marcos to the Ritz-Carlton Hotel.

The following day, they staged a picket at the US Naval Observatory where Marcos Jr met US Vice President Kamala Harris. By nightfall, they staged a protest during Marcos Jr's meeting with Filipino billionaire businessmen in a restaurant where four activists were arrested. They staged another protest on May 3.



Youth against tuition increases. Students and youth from various universities in Metro Manila marched to the CHED in Quezon City last April 28. This is protest against planned tuition increases sanctioned by the CHED in numerous private universities in the country.

Meralco, greedy for profit. Women staged a protest last May 5 at the Meralco Business Center in Kamingning to protest the company's planned imposition of electricity rate increases.

Victory at Globesco. Workers at Globesco in Quezon City won a ₱45/daily increase in wages after negotiations last April 18. They also won additional benefits and allowances.

Forces celebrate 50th NDFP anniversary

Democratic and revolutionary mass organizations mounted celebrations and assemblies across the country and even overseas to mark the 50th anniversary of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) last April 24. Concurrently, various groups paid tribute to martyrs of the Philippine revolution during the Week to Remember and Pay Tribute to Heroes and Martyrs of the Philippine Revolution on April 17-24, which will henceforth be held annually.

Tribute to Ka Laan and Ka Bagong-tao

Units of the New People's Army (NPA) silently conducted a 21-gun salute, in compliance to orders by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines and the NPA's National Operational Command, to pay tribute and give respects to Benito Tiamzon (Ka Laan), deceased Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Central Committee, and Wilma Austria-Tiamzon (Ka Bagong-tao), General Secretary of the Party.

Red commanders and fighters read and discussed the tribute to Ka Laan and Ka Bagong-tao issued by the Political Bureau of the Central Committee. The tribute discussed the revolutionary beginnings of the Tiamzons, their contributions and exemplary leadership of the Party over the past decades.

Based on initial reports received by Ang Bayan, units of the NPA in Central Luzon, Southern Tagalog,

Bicol, Panay, Negros, North Central Mindanao at Northeastern Mindanao conducted the 21-gun salute.

Allied organizations of the NDFP also paid tribute to Ka Laan and Ka Bagong-tao. Chapters of the Makabayang Kilusan ng Bagong Kababaihan, Cordillera People's Democratic Front, Pambansang Katipunan ng mga Magbubukid, Liga ng Agham para sa Bayan, Pambansang Samahan ng Makabayang Tsuper, Katipunan ng mga Samahang Manggagawa, Compatriots, Kabataang Makabayan, Christians for National Liberation and other groups issued their statements.

Various organizations and parties in Ireland, China, Turkey, Palestine, Paris, Rojava, Germany, Switzerland expressed sympathies and paid tribute. Some of them also held meetings to honor Ka Laan and Ka Bagong-tao.

On April 24, national democratic organizations under the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) held

a program to give tribute to Ka Laan and Ka Bagong-tao and all martyrs of the Philippine revolution over the past five decades. Around 1,200 joined the program held within the University of the Philippines-Diliman in Quezon City.

Other assemblies and activities

In addition to assemblies of the masses and fighters within guerrilla fronts, and secret gatherings of the members of underground revolutionary organizations in the Philippines, a two-day activity was also held by the NDFP at the Kurdish Democratic People's Center in The Hague, The Netherlands from April 22 to 23.

During the meeting, Julie de Lima, the Interim Chairperson of the NDFP Negotiating Panel discussed the growth of the NDFP from its establishment just a few months after the declaration of martial law. Friends of the Philippine revolution in The Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Norway, Spain, France Kurdistan, Turkey, Palestine, China, the US, Canada, Asia-Pacific, Korea, New Zealand, Colombia and Eritrea attended the assembly.

Around 80 migrants belonging to the NDFP-Australia and other supportive organizations assembled to celebrate the golden anniversary.

Meanwhile, a lightning protest was held on April 17 at EDSA in Cubao, Quezon City by around 300 members of the NDFP to celebrate its 50th anniversary. They held a program at around 8 a.m. at the Cubao Rotunda.

Chapters and allied organizations of the NDFP launched wide slogan painting and poster operations in various parts of the country to uphold the NDFP's golden anniversary and its 12-Point Program. AU



Too expensive, dangerous and unstable nuclear energy

Ferdinand Marcos Jr bragged that during his US visit, he attracted the interest of companies producing small nuclear plants to “invest” in the Philippine energy sector. The NuScale Power Corporation supposedly declared “interest” to conduct a study about the potential places for building small modular reactors or SMRs in the Philippines.

NuScale will supposedly invest \$7.5 billion in the country to supply up to 430 megawatts in 2031. Marcos took advantage of the unstable power supply in various parts of the country to convince Filipinos to accept the extravagantly expensive, dangerous and untested nuclear technology.

News of plans to build small nuclear plants first emerged after the Philippine visit last year of US Vice Pres. Kamala Harris. The project is part of the Marcos-Harris 123 Agreement to allow the entry of American nuclear companies to Philippines. Among the targets of five SMRs is a town along the coast of Pangasinan facing the South China Sea.

Patriotic congressmen vehemently denounced these agreements. They said these reactors can also produce raw material or supply energy for nuclear armament. This violates agreements for nuclear non-proliferation entered into by the reactionary state.

Who and what is the NuScale Power Corp?

The NuScale Power Corporation is a company that develops and manufactures SMRs based on the research of scientists at the Oregon State University. The US government subsidizes NuScale’s research and production.

The company’s SMRs were described by the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis, a US-based research group, as “too time-consuming (to build), too expensive, too risky and uncertain.” In 2021, the company disclosed that electricity generated by its SMR network will cost \$58 per megawatt hour (Mwh). By 2023, estimates put production at \$89/Mwh amid rising costs of construction.

The \$89/Mwh price of NuScale’s nuclear energy is “eye-popping” compared to the price of energy produced from solar and wind (\$40/Mwh and \$30/Mwh in 2020). By 2030, it is estimated that solar and

wind energy will cost \$20/Mwh while the cost of production of SMRs may reach \$200/Mwh.

The company has yet to construct, operate and test its SMRs for the commercial production of energy anywhere in the world since developing in the 2000s. The company announced only last May 2022 its first ever six SMRs capable of generating 10MWh in Romania. NuScale itself estimates that construction will last up to 54 months before becoming operational.

The claims by nuclear “experts” in the Philippines that the country can “economize” from SMRs are baseless. Currently, the construction of 8-12 SMRs capable of generating 462 megawatts of electricity will cost \$9.3 billion.

Neither is NuScale or whomever is in a position to claim that its SMRs will be more efficient and productive for the simple reason that no such operations prevail yet.

Claims that SMRs are “cleaner” than bigger nuclear plants run contrary to the truth. A study by the Stanford University in 2022 show that SMRs produce “a bigger volume of nuclear waste.” AB

People’s militias in Camarines Norte hold tribute

A unit of the people’s militia under the New People’s Army-Camarines Norte (Armando Catapia Command) silently performed a 21-gun salute in honor of Benito Tiamzon and Wilma Austria in tandem with the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP).

Led by the local Party branch and MB leadership, preparations for the tribute were undertaken, including the venue and invitations for people in the vicinity.

Despite being busy with production, local party units and members of mass organizations devoted two days to give the highest tribute

to the great leaders and heroes of the Philippine revolution.

The activity was divided into two parts. In the first part, the 21-gun salute was performed for the Tiamzon couple and other revolutionary martyrs, after which the tribute of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee was dis-

cussed. In the second part, local mass organizations gave their messages and laid out their challenges and tasks.

Units of the people’s militia in the province under the guidance of local Party branches possess a strong spirit of resistance and are always ready to assist the NPA in defeating the fascist military and police. The people’s militias are made up of peasants who bear arms to defend their livelihood and rights against the exploitative and ruling classes.

Workers call for substantial wage increases on May 1

Thousands of workers from major Philippine cities took to the streets on May 1, International Labor Day, to call for substantial wage increases and job security. They denounced Ferdinand Marcos Jr for his hypocritical gestures and failure to respond to workers' grievances.

In Metro Manila, 10,000 workers under the All Philippine Trade Unions (APTU) marched from España to Mendiola Bridge in Manila. The APTU consists of the Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino (BMP), Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU), Nagkaisa! Labor Coalition, Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP), and other workers' groups. Farmers, professionals, youth and other democratic sectors participated in the march.

After the Mendiola rally, the KMU and the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan marched to the US Embassy to condemn continuing human rights violations intensified by US military assistance. They condemned Marcos' subservience to the US and called for the abrogation of unequal military treaties.

In Laguna, up to 3,000 workers, youth, church people and others gathered at Calamba Crossing. A program was also held inside the

University of the Philippines-Los Banos.

In Cebu City, workers commemorated labor day with a march along Osmeña Boulevard. In Davao City, 400 members of the KMU-Southern Mindanao Region and other patriotic organizations gathered for the May One commemoration. They said the ₱428 to ₱443 minimum wage in the region is grossly deficient to meet a family's basic needs.

In Albay, workers in Legazpi City gathered under the leadership of the May One Committee Bicol. Drivers belonging to the No to Jeepney Phaseout Alliance joined the rally with a caravan from Busay, Daraga.

In Baguio City, members of KMU-Baguio and others gathered at Igorot Park despite the cold and pouring rain. According to the rallyists, the Cordillera worker's ₱400 daily wage could not catch up with rising commodity prices.



In Bacolod City, the United Labor Alliance Negros (ULAN) led mass actions for rights and a ₱750 national minimum wage. On their way to rally, the delegation from Kabankalan City and South Negros were blocked by police near Lorenzo Zayco District Hospital.

In Cagayan de Oro, police also blocked 70 motorcycle-riding members of the KMU in Barangay Bugo headed for the city center to participate in the rally. According to the police, orders to "monitor" the mass actions of militant workers' organizations across the country came from the national leadership.

Meanwhile, APTU condemned Marcos' arbitrary formation of a committee for coordination and management of resolving labor cases in the country through the Executive Order (EO) 23.

The current minimum wage is grossly insufficient as it is way below even by the poverty threshold set by the reactionary state, according to a study by the Ibon Foundation.

The Philippine Statistics Authority has set the poverty threshold for a family at a low ₱12,030 per month or ₱79 per day. The national average minimum wage of ₱8,902 per month is much lower than this. This is way below (63% less) than the average living wage of ₱23,787 per month.

The minimum wage of farm workers is even lower. According to state statistics, workers in plantations, sugarcane fields and other agricultural enterprises receive on average only ₱331 per day. AB

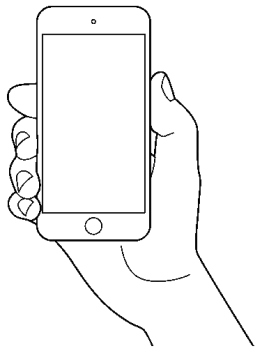
NPA ambushes 4th IB troops in Occidental Mindoro

THE NEW People's Army (NPA)-Mindoro ambushed the 4th IB at Lipitan, Barangay Monteclaro, San Jose, Occidental Mindoro on April 25. One of its soldiers was killed. A .45 caliber pistol with two magazines and a cell phone were confiscated from him.

They were involved in AFP intelligence operations and forced CAFGU recruitment of Hanunuo and Buhid in Rizal and San Jose towns.

Contrary to the lie peddled by the 4th IB that the NPA involves civilians in its attacks, the Red fighters ensured that the four civilians accompanying the three soldiers were not harmed.

In Bulacan, two soldiers of the 70th IB were killed in an encounter with the NPA-Bulacan at Sitio Balagbag Araw, Barangay San Isidro, San Jose del Monte on the morning of April 28. The 70th IB is a staunch protector of the interests of the ruling class family Villar, Robes and Araneta. They were involved in the violence against farmers in the Araneta family's land grabbing campaign of the more than 700 hectares of land in the area.



90 days

extension of the mandatory SIM card registration after about 60% of subscribers remain unregistered on April 26

12 YEARS AGO

last time real wages in the NCR were lower compared to its real value in March

Source: Ibon Foundation



186

groups petitioned Indonesia to free human trafficking victim Mary Jane Veloso on the occasion of the Women Emancipation Day on April 21

67 million



children globally were not vaccinated during the pandemic. It is feared that a pandemic of polio, measles and other diseases would break out next year.

Source: Unicef

1 young eagle spotted in Bukidnon's mountains on April 26.



According to experts, eagles need 4,000 up to 11,000 hectares of undisturbed forests to thrive.

Source: Philippine Eagle Foundation

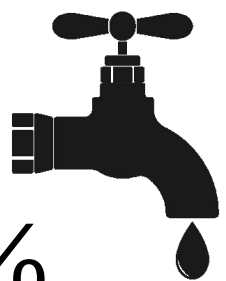
₱375.71 billion

amount paid by the Marcos Jr regime for debt on February, 10 times higher than the **₱30.42 billion** payment in February 2022.

Cope Thunder



US aerial war games in the Philippines which began 2 days after the conclusion of Balikatan 2023. The last iteration of similar aerial exercises were held in 1990.



67%

of Filipinos do not have running water inside their house

Source: Social Weather Station

The AFP's dirty tactics of abduction and summary killing

A series of cases of enforced disappearances of civilians, activists and revolutionaries have been reported in the past week throughout the country. At least eight were abducted by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) while three were summarily killed. The victims of the killing were claimed to have been killed in "encounters" between the AFP and the New People's Army (NPA).

These cases are grave violations of international humanitarian law and the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL).

Military violence in Negros

The 94th IB summarily killed Roger Posadas, consultant of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) in Negros and dumped his body in Barangay Santol, Binalbagan, Negros Occidental on April 20. Soldiers claimed that he was killed in a series of fake encounters.

Posadas was abducted by the military on the night of April 19 while traveling along the Aranda-La Castellana Road in Hinigaran town. Lyngrace Martullinas and the rented two civilian motorcycle drivers, Renren

delos Santos and Renald Mialen, were abducted along with him. All three have not been surfaced to this day.

On April 28, the 62nd IB also summarily killed an ailing 22 year-old Red fighter Anthony Curson (Ka Miguel) at Sitio Malatnglad, Barangay Budlasan, Canlaon City. Curson had kidney disease and was an hors de combat at the time.

After being captured, Curson was taken to the house of farmer Leonido Montero where he was severely tortured before being killed. After this, Montero was subjected to torture, arrested and imprisoned on trumped-up charges.

On May 3, a farmer was picked up by the 94th IB from his house at Sitio Paloypoy, Barangay Buenavista in Himamaylan City and was bound, interrogated and killed. The victim was

identified as Crispin Tingal Jr.

Not satisfied, the soldiers also chased the victim's son and fired multiple shots at him. He escaped and dodged the soldiers' bullets. As a result, at least eight families were forced to evacuate.

Meanwhile, the group BPO Industry Employees Network (BIEN) Philippines called for justice for the killing of its member and unionist Alex Dolorosa in Bacolod City. His body was found at Villa Sto. Rosario, Barangay Alijis on April 24. Dolorosa was last seen alive on the night of April 23.

Dolorosa served as a paralegal and organizer for BIEN. Before he was killed, he was subjected to surveillance by state agents.

Other cases of abduction

Soldiers of the 4th IB abducted two indigenous peoples' rights defenders at Sitio Buol, Barangay Santa Teresita, Mansalay, Oriental Mindoro on April 24. The two, identified as

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NDF-Ilocos holds conference

Under the leadership of the Communist Party of the Philippines, members of the Pambansang Katipunan ng mga Magbubukid and Christians for National Liberation in Ilocos gathered to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the NDFP on April 24. They honored Ka Laan and Ka Bagong-tao and held a conference to advance the anti-imperialist, anti-feudal and anti-fascist struggle of the Ilocano masses.

Along with the commemoration, a conference of revolutionary farmers, fishermen, national minorities and church people was held to enrich and synthesize the (results of the) social investigation and class analysis of the current economic and political situation of Ilocos.

The conference highlighted the influx and expansion of projects for renewable energy, especially in Ilocos Norte, that leads to the widespread seizure of farmers' farms

and ancestral lands of the Yapayao, Isnag, Balangon and Kankanaey tribes. Intertwined with these projects is widespread deforestation that leads to landslides. Even the fishing grounds of small fishermen are being seized in the plan to build offshore windmills.

The conference identified as a regional issue the influx and deployment of US Marines and Philippine Marines troops in the various towns of Ilocos Norte, especially in

the communities along the shores of the South China Sea. These areas are also the target for the construction and expansion of solar and wind power plants.

The conference resolved to encourage and advance the mass struggle in Ilocos to fight for the sovereignty and security of the Philippines against the US-driven war against China. It also decided to advance the struggle for the self-determination of the national minority and Ilocano farmers against the seizure of their farms and ancestral lands by foreign capitalist companies that are in collusion with the Marcos regime. They vowed to intensify the fight against militarization and human rights violations.

Batangas-Mindoro "super-bridge": anti-people and environmentally destructive

Residents of Mindoro and neighboring islands continue to suffer from the destruction of the ocean and their livelihoods as a result of the oil spill from the sunken ship MT Princess Empress. This aggravates their already prolonged suffering from severe brownouts resulting from the incompetence of the Department of Energy and the local electric cooperative.

Instead of fairly compensating the affected people, an environmentally destructive project is now being proposed by the Marcos Jr regime, in collusion with the big bourgeois comprador Ramon Ang. Ang and his companies are among those who support the services of the unlicensed ships of RDC Reied Marine Services, the company that owns the MT Princess Empress. Ang took over the companies of Eduardo Cojuangco Jr, the biggest crony of the father of the current president and former dictator Ferdinand Marcos Sr.

To cover-up accountability, Ang revived the Batangas-Mindoro "super bridge" project that he claims will be the "solution" to the Mindoreños' suffering. He insists that the bridge will bring "growth and development" not only to Oriental Mindoro but to the entire region of Mimaropa (Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, Palawan.)

The destructive project was first proposed in 2011.

Destroying livelihood and the environment

The Batangas-Mindoro "super bridge" is a 15-kilometer bridge that will connect the Mindoro island to Luzon island on the Batangas side. According to the proposal, it will start in Barangay Ilijan in Batangas City, pass through Isla Verde and connect to Barangay Sinandigan in Puerto Galera. In the project's publicized details, its "deepest point" reaches up to 300 meters below sea level. It is said to be able to withstand winds of 354kph. (It means that it could be destroyed by a typhoon as strong as Yolanda in 2013 bearing winds up to 378kph.)

According to Ang's latest estimate, the bridge could be built within five years at a cost of ₱18 billion. It boasts of being the first "floating

bridge" in the Philippines and the longest in Asia. Bridges of similar design are often built for temporary use and only for short distances.

The bridge will cross the protected Verde Island Passage (VIP), which is called the "center of the center of marine biodiversity" of the whole world. The VIP covers 1.14 million hectares of sea surrounded by the provinces of Batangas, Oriental Mindoro, Occidental Mindoro, Marinduque and Romblon. The largest number of shorefish species in the world can be found here. To date, 1,736 marine species have been documented in the area, several of which are considered endangered species. It is an important site for scientists and researchers.

More importantly, the resource-rich VIP is a fishing ground for hundreds of fishermen. The livelihoods of an estimated two million people in five provinces depend on the VIP.

In 2018, the local governments of Batangas and Mindoro provinces drafted a petition to have the VIP declared a World Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. But for now, the local government's negotiations with Ang is in full swing to revive the project.

In addition to the oil spill and the Batangas-Mindoro super bridge, Ang is also involved in other destructive projects in the VIP. In 2021, his companies were among those pushing to mine liquid natural gas in the area. This follows the construction of 27 new plants and seven LNG terminals in the coastal communities of Batangas.

Apart from destroying the VIP, Ang is also notorious for destroying mangroves and evicting fishermen in Bulacan in the ongoing construction of the multi-billion Aerotropolis project. Another destructive project of his is the Pasig River Expressway which is strongly opposed by the residents of the city.

From page 8

Mary Joyce Lizada and Arnulfo "Ompong" Aumentado, are members of the Bigkis at Lakas ng mga Katutubo sa Timog Katagalugan.

The military surfaced them on April 26 claiming they were "arrested after being wounded" in a fake encounter. They are now kept at the 2nd ID's Camp Capinpin in Tanay, Rizal and are denied their right to be visited by and have communication with relatives and lawyers.

Dexter Capuyan, a Bontoc-Ibaloi-Kankanaey from La Trinidad, Benguet and Gene Roz Jamil De Jesus, a defender of indigenous rights, were abducted by

state forces and have yet to be surfaced. According to human rights groups, the two were last contacted on the night of April 28 while in Taytay, Rizal for Capuyan's medical check-up.

Their relatives are deeply concerned about their condition and safety because Capuyan is accused by the AFP of being an NPA leader in the Ilocos-Cordillera region with a ₱1,850,000 reward money for his capture. Apart from this, Capuyan is also implicated in cases of murder, attempted murder and frustrated murder of AFP soldiers in February 2015 in Barangay Namitpit, Quirino, Ilocos Sur.