

ANG

Pahayagan ng Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas  
Pinapatnubayan ng Marxismo-Leninismo-Maoismo

# Bayan

English Edition

Vol LV No. 6

March 21, 2024

[www.philippinerevolution.nu](http://www.philippinerevolution.nu)

EDITORIAL

## Wage armed struggle against the US-Marcos regime's fascist onslaught

The Filipino people are burning with rage at the US-Marcos regime over its all-out fascist oppression throughout the country, especially in the countryside. The peasant masses are outraged that amidst widespread misery and hunger, the reactionary regime is intent on fascism and land grabbing.

Desperate to "finish off" the revolutionary armed resistance of the Filipino people, the US-Marcos regime's armed tentacles is carrying out a rampant terrorist and fascist rampage throughout the country. Marcos and the AFP are set to make one false declaration after another that provinces have become "insurgency-free," especially in areas that have long been targets of foreign corporations for mining, plantation

and energy projects. At the behest of US imperialism, the AFP is also in a hurry to "end" the armed struggle of the Filipino people so that the US military can fully employ the AFP in its war of provocation against China which is likely to intensify in the coming year.

Marcos and the leadership of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) have recently ordered an all-out war. The declared aim of this

war is to dismantle all NPA guerrilla fronts by the end of March, destroy all NPA combat units by the end of June, and destroy all regional Party committees before the end of the year. Thousands of military troops, alongside police combat troops and tens of thousands of paramilitaries armed by the AFP, have been dispatched to ravage the countryside.

Hundreds of villages are being garrisoned by Marcos' fascist minions. Oppressive soldiers are controlling people's lives and livelihoods, silencing them and trampling on their rights and freedoms. Checkpoints and food blockades, prohibiting people from



working in their fields or swidden farms, armed soldiers occupying barangay centers, going house to house and forcing people to "surrender," harassing young women or even married women, all-night drinking, beatings and altercations, indiscriminate firing of guns—this is how people perceive the rotten soldiers. Amid drought and disasters, fascist soldiers are like pests who bring nothing but disaster to their communities.

Using powerful weapons such as drones and jetfighters, helicopters and howitzers, Marcos's terrorist soldiers are bombing mountains and fields, indiscriminately firing night or day, destroying the forests and poisoning waters, shattering the peace and causing deep trauma to the people, especially children, pregnant women and the elderly. These result in unnecessary number of lives lost, contrary to all principles and laws of civilized warfare.

The evil aim of Marcos is to instill fear in the hearts of the people and force them prostrate while allowing their land to be grabbed by big foreign capitalists and their partner comprador bourgeoisie and big landlords. But instead of falling on the ground, the people are more and

more roused to stand up and fight, and tread the path of armed revolution.

In the guerrilla fronts across the country, the units of the New People's Army (NPA) continue to enjoy deep and widespread support from the peasant masses. Military officers of the AFP and the reactionary state are furious that despite their intensified all-out war which has lasted for almost seven years, the peasant masses continue to provide political and material support to the Red fighters. Young farmers, as well as young students, workers, as well as professionals continue to join the people's army.

The people's desire to carry forward the armed struggle continues to burn. Amid fascist attacks perpetrated by the armed minions of the US-Marcos regime, and oppressive policies that worsen their plight, it is becoming clearer to the minds and


consciousness of the peasant masses that they completely have nothing if they do not have the New People's Army on their side to defend their lives and rights, and to fight with for their land and livelihood.

In recent years, the NPA has suffered losses and setbacks in various parts of the country due to the errors and weaknesses of conservatism and complacency with its previous accomplishments. Instead of boldly treading the path of continuous expansion and invigoration of the armed struggle, the scope and mass base of guerrilla units were reduced, and units became passive and vulnerable to enemy encirclement. Under the guidance of and inspired by the Party, the NPA is determined to rectify errors and move forward on the path of strengthening and galvanizing the people's war.

In the spirit of the rectification movement, the NPA must more vigorously wage armed struggle in all parts of the country. Utilizing the broad mass movement in guerrilla warfare, they must use all weapons—guns and rocks, spears and punji traps, shotguns and landmines—and carry out large or small tactical offensives that can be won against weak and isolated parts of the enemy. Strike at the enemy's fascist troops and all its tentacles by way of rendering justice for the people and inspiring their resistance. Only by waging widespread armed resistance can the NPA consolidate, overcome setbacks and strengthen.

Since its establishment, five and a half decades ago, the NPA has served as the true people's army in promoting the revolutionary aspirations of the Filipino people for national democracy. On its coming anniversary on March 29, let us celebrate its accomplishments for the past 55 years, pay tribute to all the martyrs and heroes, and reaffirm the determination to advance the protracted people's war, without fear of sacrifices and hardships, to achieve ultimate victory in the future.



<p><b>ANG Bayan</b></p> <p>Vol LV No. 6   March 21, 2024</p> <hr/> <p>Ang Bayan is published in Pilipino, Bisaya, Iloko, Hiligaynon, Waray, and English. Ang Bayan welcomes contributions in the form of articles and news items. Readers are encouraged to send feedback and recommendations for improving our newspaper.</p>	<h2>Contents</h2> <p><b>Editorial:</b> Wage armed struggle against the US-Marcos regime's fascist onslaught 1</p> <p>Extol the heroism of revolutionary women 3</p> <p>Women heavily bear half the imperialist sky 4</p> <p>In short 5</p> <p>Violent demolition in Angeles City injures seven 6</p> <p>Women's Day against charter change 7</p> <p>Workers' struggles 7</p> <p>Protests 7</p> <p>The masses link arms to confront El Niño 8</p> <p>Imported LNG, a disaster to the people 9</p> <p>US officials arrive in the country this March 10</p>
<p>Ang Bayan is published fortnightly by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines</p>	
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# Extol the heroism of revolutionary women

The contribution of valiant women in advancing the liberation movement and revolutionary struggle in the Philippines cannot be underestimated. From the Spanish colonial period, American and Japanese occupation, the Marcos fascist dictatorship, and up to the present, they have raised high the purple flag to advance the interests of women and the motherland. They have shouldered and continue to make heavy sacrifices, and with full determination carry out their revolutionary tasks.

The modern generation of revolutionary women emulate and are inspired by the examples of Gabriela Silang, who led the liberation movement in Ilocos against Spain in 1763; by Coronacion Chiva (Kumander Waling-waling), who led the anti-Japan guerrillas in Panay and continued against the Marcos dictatorship; by Maria Lorena Barros, key figure and founder of the Makabayang Kilusan ng Bagong Kababaihan; by Wilma Tiamzon, general secretary of the Communist Party of the Philippines; by Helenita Parladis, secretary of the Eastern Visayas Party committee; by mother-and-daughter Beverly Sinunta, North Central Mindanao sub-regional secretary, and Chenchen Banawan; by Emarie Pastidio who was official of an NPA-Negros platoon; and many more women who were martyred in the battlefield. Their immeasurable contribution in the advancement of the people's revolution provide strength to hundreds of women fighters.

## Legacy to young women

Among these women is Ka Lira, a 26-year-old Red fighter of the New People's Army (NPA) in one of the Southern Tagalog guerrilla fronts. "I now fulfill the role of political guide and sometimes political instructor," she shared. She has been in the NPA for six years.



"Every day, I realize that there is much more to learn, and to overcome," Ka Lira said. As a woman and from the petty bourgeois class, she strives to break the stereotype of women as weak and limited in ability.

"There are also female military officers, snipers and commanders, and leaders in battles!" she says. Newly enlisted male fighters are often surprised when they witness this. Their presence in the people's army is already a victory against macho-feudal culture. "When village women see us, they greet us with wonder. Especially mothers, who sincerely ask why I chose to leave a life of comfort."

"I told them life like ours is not really easy, but I accept the sacrifice knowing what it is for," she says. "I just show them there's really nothing to worry about."

## Bravery in confronting the enemy

The spirit of Ka Rema, a woman Red fighter of the NPA-North Central Mindanao, never wavered, even while in the hands of the enemy. Only thirteen days after giving birth through cesarean section, Ka Rema traversed the forest to escape the enemy and return to her NPA unit.

Ka Rema is a key officer in an NPA fighting unit.

Ka Rema was treacherously arrested by the military while in the hospital after delivery. She was subjected to intense interrogation and forced to take on a counterrevolutionary "mission".

During that time, she carefully answered the military officer's questions and made sure she gave no new and sensitive data. She fooled them and was tasked to convince her Red warrior husband to surrender.

Never once did Ka Rema think of betraying her comrades, the masses and the revolution. Escape from the fascists was always foremost on her mind. When the opportunity came to escape, she immediately grabbed it. Before leaving, she tightly embraced her weeping 9-year-old firstborn and her newborn. "Perhaps they will understand this in the future," thought Ka Rema.

That day, Ka Rema arrived at the camp of the people's army. She thanked comrades and the masses who aided her escape. "I am so happy to have returned to my true home!" Ka Rema emotionally greeted her comrades. AB

# Women bear half the imperialist sky

**F**ilipino women bear the worst effects of the neoliberal policies imposed by US imperialism and its puppet state in the past four decades. Due to policies of liberalization, deregulation and privatization, they are further marginalized to the fringes of society, where they are forced to endure informal, insecure and jobs with slave-like wages.

The majority of women belong to the most exploited and oppressed sectors of society—workers, farmers and indigenous people, the rural and urban poor. In the past decade, more than half of them, age 15 and older, have not been counted as part of the labor force because of the nature of the jobs they perform. Among them are the millions of housewives who engage in farm work and accept "sideline" jobs while burdened with heavy housework and childcare. In 2022, about 20 million were excluded from the labor force, unemployed and underemployed.

Seven out of every ten women considered employed are in the service sector. Jobs here are classified as "low-skilled" and are irregular. This is despite women's relatively higher educational attainment.

In the manufacturing sector, 90% of women are "irregular" and very few (2.7%) are under unions. A significant number of women are in factories of big foreign capitalists within the export processing zones, making them part of the international assembly line (what imperialists call the global value chain). Foreigners are said to "prefer" female workers because of their docility, skill in detailed work such as assembling semiconductors or sewing, and flexibility in overtime. The truth is, these qualities are not inherent in women, but arise from desperation resulting from the acute employment crisis, which

capitalists and labor agencies exploit.

Furthermore, they are generally paid less, compared to men. In the clothing industry, for example, their wage levels are generally 17%-25% lower.

Manufacturing companies pay literally small change to urban poor women who they contract wholesale to perform some part of the assembly work. They are what the International Labor Organization calls "home-based" industrial workers. Some of their jobs are small-scale sewing, embroidery, assembling small household items, food manufacturing, making handicrafts and tourist decorations and others.

Among freelancers, women in digital jobs earn 18.4% less, compared to men. This is due to the

"traditional view" that women are more suited to the type of jobs that are "less complex" such as encoding, as opposed to "more complex" and higher value-added jobs such as digital design which is said to be "more suitable" for men.

In agriculture, women farm workers receive 8% to 15% less wages, compared to the already meager wages of men. (Both daily wages are lower compared to the wages of service and industrial workers, and all wages are insufficient for their families' needs.) More often than not, women (and children) are not paid because their role in production are considered "extensions of housework."

To support their families, many women leave their children behind, go out of the country to work as maids, nannies and other jobs that expose them to extreme exploitation, oppression, violence, and in some cases, their deaths. In 2022, 1.10 million women (60.2%) emigrated, compared to 726,000 men (39.8%). Despite this, the average remittances of female migrant workers are lower (₱61,000) compared to men (₱126,000).

In rural areas, women farmers suffer widespread landlessness. A very small number (6.1%) have sole or shared ownership of land. They bear the brunt of the problem of high prices of farm inputs, low prices of produce and losses during calamities. A large majority are in debt to moneylenders and microfinance institutions, not only for production, but for the daily needs of their families. AB



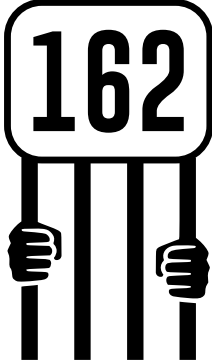
**March 17, 1995**



**Lorena Barros**  
 founder of MAKIBAKA, was born on March 18, 1948 in Baguio City. **She joined the NPA after martial law was declared in 1972. She was martyred in an ambush at the age of 28.**

was when domestic helper **Flor Contemplacion** was hanged in Singapore for the crime of murder.

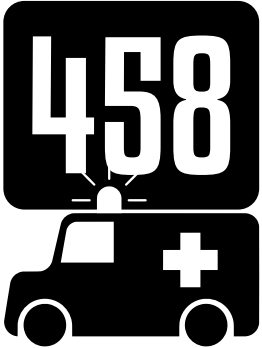
She is among the millions of Filipino women forced to emigrate due to lack of decent work in the Philippines.



**of 812 political detainees in the country are women, were 97 are peasant women.**

Among them are 23 arrested under the Marcos regime.

**5** of the encounters reported by the AFP with the NPA in a barangay in Cataingan, Masbate the past 6 months is staged or fake.



**Palestinian health workers killed by Zionist Israel's genocidal campaign from October 7, 2023 to March 11, 2024.**

Health workers are protected under international humanitarian law.

Source: Health Workers Watch-Palestine

**54/day**

women and children victims of violence in the first eight months of 2023.

Most were victims of rape, where 76% were children. In most cases, the suspect was an acquaintance or the victim's father himself. The highest number of cases were recorded in the Davao region.



**5** consecutive fires occurred in 4 barangays in Bacoor City and Kawit, Cavite on February 8-27.

Residents and fisherfolk here believe the fires were set off deliberately to drive them away and make way for infrastructure and reclamation projects in the area.

Prayer

**PANUNULSOL NG US NG IMPERYALISTANG GERA SA CHINA, BANTA SA BUHAY AT KALAYAAN NG MGA PILIPINO**

Marso 2024

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# Violent demolition in Angeles City injures seven

Seven residents of Sitio Balubad, Barangay Anunas, Angeles City, Pampanga were injured on March 12 as a result of indiscriminate firing of police officers. The police acted as security forces for the demolition crew of the Clark Hills Properties Corporation that rammed through the residents' barricade. The combined forces of police and thugs numbered 500. More than 500 households are affected by the demolition plan in the 72-hectare land being seized by the company. An estimated 2,000 residents are victims of land grabbing.

State forces and thugs violently demolished houses near the barricade and forced their way into the village entries. Confronted by the residents' resistance, the police opened fire, hitting seven residents in their chests and legs. They also threatened two journalists who were reporting on the violence.

The next day, thugs attacked the sitio again and broke house windows.

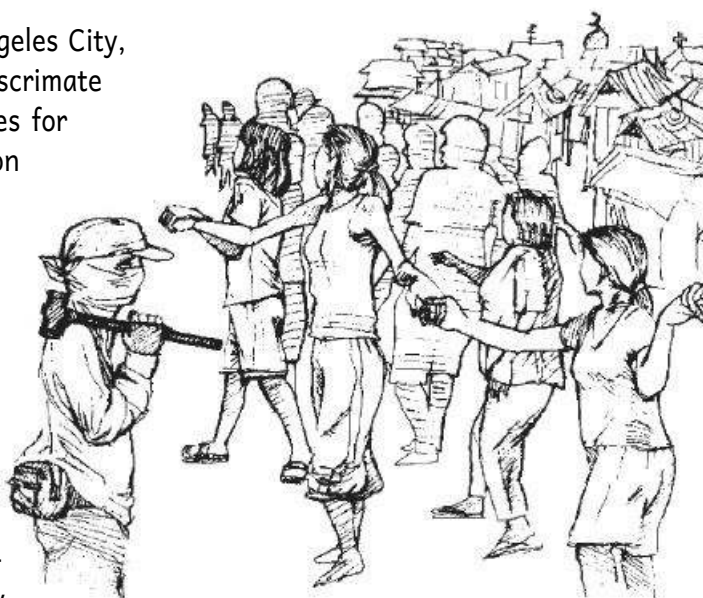
**Bombing.** The AFP dropped at least 22 aerial bombs on communities in Abra from February 25 to February 27. This was followed by shelling and strafing by soldiers that hit near the residents' fish ponds, pastures and crops. It affected the areas between barangays Bazar, Sallapadan and Barangay Bulbulala, Licuan-Baa.

In Bukidnon, 10th ID troops again shelled areas in Valencia City, on March 10, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The AFP fired 18 bombs us-

ing 105 howitzers stationed in Sitio Bulakaw, Barangay Concepcion in the said city.

**Shooting.** The 2nd IB opened fire in Sitio Cayang, Barangay Li-ong, Cataingan, Masbate on March 11 to stage a fake "encounter" with the New People's Army (NPA). The military intimidated and even forced barangay officials to sign a certification testifying that a battle occurred in the area.

**Illegal detention and deportation.** Filipino activist Marikit Saturday was arbitrarily detained and forcibly deported to The Netherlands when she visited the Philippines on March 7 to attend her grandmother's birthday. The Bureau of Immigration (BI) detained her for three nights at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) before forcibly deporting her to her country of origin. The BI



claims her to be in a "blacklist order" due to her participation in "anti-government activities."

**Pressure.** State forces have been relentlessly intimidating and harassing the family of the NPA Red fighters who were martyred in Bilar, Bohol on February 23. The police repeatedly visited the family of martyr Perlito Historia in the past few weeks to force them to withdraw their planned autopsy of the victim's remains. The police tried to bribe Historia's family and threatened them when they refused.

**Violation of workers' rights.** Technol Eight Philippines Workers Union (TEPWU)-OLALIA-KMU leader Mario Fernandez was again harassed on March 9. The incident is believed related to their upcoming negotiations for a new collective bargaining agreement (CBA). He suffered the same ordeal in 2022.

Meanwhile, the company Pro-food International Corporation neglected its worker Isidro Rosell, 62, who suffered an accident at the Mandaue Plant in Barangay Maguikay, Mandaue City, Cebu. Rosell has been working for the company for eighteen years. On February 20, he accidentally fell off the truck when he was hauling co-coshells from the factory. It caused a blood clot in his brain. The company refused to give support. AB

## Women's Day against charter change

ON WOMEN'S DAY, March 8, women's groups led by Gabriela, and various democratic organizations, marched to express their opposition to the charter change (chacha) of the Marcos Jr regime, and their demand for human rights, livelihood and sovereignty. From España Avenue, they planned to march to Mendiola but were stopped by the police at Morayta Street. They held a program in front of the Far Eastern University in Morayta.

In the program, Gabriela presented a protest art in the form of a chacha "gift" of the Marcos regime to women. Inside the box were snakes symbolizing 100% foreign ownership, more US military bases in the country, and term extensions for state officials. The box is wrapped in a US flag.

Similar actions were launched in the cities of Baguio, Calamba, Naga, Cebu, Iloilo, Bacolod and Davao.



**New layoffs in Nexperia. Nexperia Workers Philippines Inc.** Workers Union (NWPIWU)-NAFLU-KMU condemned Nexperia Philippines for the new round of layoffs planned for April to September. The company notified the union on March 4 of a nearly two-week shutdown in one of its areas and the retrenchment of 53 workers. The company warned this is just the first in a possible series of layoffs. Nexperia's planned mass layoff violates the conditions in its collective bargaining agreement (CBA) with the union. The union is currently negotiating for its 2024-2026 CBA.

**PUP janitors demand benefits.** Janitors and members of the Samahan ng Janitorial (SJ), Anakbayan members and students staged a picket before the Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP) in Santa Mesa, Manila on March 13 to demand payment of delayed benefits of the janitors from Starcom Manpower Agency. The protest was held during a dialogue between workers and agency representatives. The janitors already communicated their grievances last year to the PUP administration and the agency over unpaid incentives, 13th month pay, retroactive pay, and about the lack of transparency in their wages.

**National Day of Remembrance for Migrants.** Migrant members protested before the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) on March 17 as part of their commemoration of the National Migrant Remembrance Day. Meanwhile, overseas Filipino workers from Saudi Arabia picketed to demand the hard-earned wages and benefits that have yet to be paid since they were laid off in 2016 in that country. According to the DMW, there up to 9,000 such workers.

**Passage of RBH7 in Congress opposed.** Various democratic organizations protested in front of Congress in a People's Rally on March 20 to oppose the passage of RBH7, the bill pushing for charter change (chacha). A few hours later, Congress passed the proposal with a vote of 288 in favor, eight against and two abstentions. Among the eight who objected were congressmen from the Makabayan bloc. Along with the protest in Congress, students also staged protests along Katipunan Avenue, in front of the Ateneo de Manila University.

**Address the effects of El Niño.** Amihan, the national federation of agricultural women, picketed before the Department of Agriculture office in Quezon City on March 7 to condemn the Marcos regime for its inaction amid the impact of El Niño on the peasant masses. They demand Marcos and his agencies to provide immediate relief and aid, especially those whose crops were damaged by the drought.

**Demolition in Navotas City opposed.** Fisherfolk belonging to the Pamabansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) staged a protest rally along the Navotas City coast on March 15 to oppose the local government's order to dismantle their clam pens and crab traps to make way for the Navotas Bay Reclamation Project. The 650-hectare reclamation is being pushed by the local government and its partner Argonbay Construction Company, a subsidiary of San Miguel Corporation owned by Ramon Ang. Despite objections, company personnel and the Coast Guard carried out the demolition on March 18.

**Day against big dams marked.** National minority groups and environmentalists protested at the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) office in Visayas Avenue, Quezon City on March 14 to oppose the construction of large dams in the country and demand the protection of rivers. The protest coincides with the worldwide commemoration of the International Day of Action for Rivers and Against Large Dams.

**Marcos met with protests in Germany.** Ferdinand Marcos Jr's visit to Berlin on March 13 was met with protests by Filipino migrants. ALPAS Pilipinas and Gabriela-Germany led the protests joined by German allied organizations. They say Marcos Jr's visit to Germany and other European countries from March 11-15 should serve as an occasion for all Filipino migrants and human rights defenders to condemn the brutal regime that commit gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law (IHL).

**LGBTQIA+ at EARIST stand up against discrimination.** LGBTQIA+ people spearheaded by Bahaghari-EARIST protested at its campus in Santa Mesa, Manila on March 15 supporting transwoman students banned from enrolling for refusing to cut their hair. The school temporarily suspended the provision following the protest.

# The masses link arms to confront El Niño

The total cost of damage brought by the El Niño drought to the agricultural sector in Negros Occidental has reached ₱78.45 million. The province is in Western Visayas, one of the regions that is presently experiencing the brunt of El Niño. The drought severely affected eleven (three cities and eight towns) out of its total of 32 municipalities. Thousands of families now suffer from hunger and lack of potable water.

Amid the negligence of the local government and the US-Marcos regime, coupled with relentless militarization, the peasant masses have no choice but to unite to collectively face the drought calamity.

## Demand for government accountability

Farmers' organizations are planning coordinated and level-by-level mass campaigns in Negros Occidental to address El Niño. They started consultations, meetings and study campaigns at the barangay level, and they aim to expand it to town and district levels. They prepare a petition stating their call to the government for adequate aid, food and subsidies for their production.

Masses of farmers in the province now face the destruction of their crops. In Negros Occidental, only 41,140 hectares out of 94,297 hectares are irrigated, which is also affected by the drought. A farmer relates, "we skipped the 3rd cropping of rice since we only depended on rain for irrigation."

This prompted others to plan planting corn instead to supplement

their food needs. Nevertheless, they can only begin planting when the rains come. Others planted vegetables and now exert extra effort to fetch water from distant wells to water them. "Sources have run out, even small rivers have no water," said another.

Only 67% of the government's target to develop irrigation nationwide was implemented last year. Many canals are already useless, have been repurposed and are completely destroyed. Irrigation water from dams is also greatly reduced because most is allocated to the electricity industry and services.

Even their animals are affected. Carabaos, cows, goats, and other domestic animals have run out of pasture lands because the grass is dry and they have nothing to eat. Some animals have died because of the extreme heat.

El Niño affects not only livelihood, but also the health of the residents. The extreme heat has resulted in an epidemic of cough, fever, cold and other illnesses. Cases of stroke, increased blood pressure, and fatigue have also been recorded in some areas.

Amid all this, farmers were extremely insulted by the meager ₱2,500 aid the local government have distributed to farmers owning three hectares of rice fields. They say the ₱15 million fund to buy pumps and equipment for irrigation was also released very late and was all for show.

They insist that given no significant help, they are ready to act united for a dialogue and confrontation with local agencies.

## Dagyaw-Alayon

To support production, farmers revived *dagyaw-alayon*, the traditional form of agricultural cooperation in the region.

In the southern part of Negros Occidental, they set to communally cultivate an area of land they acquired through a successful campaign. They agreed to plant corn on the land. "This is the primary aspect of the cooperation...we follow the framework of "work points," shared the participating farmer. They agreed that the women's group will water the corn fields nightly.

Their unity and alliance work with the middle forces in the community also bore fruit. They said the hoses they got as support were a big help. They use this for irrigation especially with distant water sources.

"Our cooperation further improved most especially during El Niño...especially our work in the kampo (cane fields) is also about to end," according to a farmer. This will also help, he said, with food sources this dry season. At times like these, a farmer even attested, "we have nothing else to rely on but our cooperation." AB





# Imported LNG, its facilities and plants, bring disaster to the environment and people

This March, three big bourgeoisie-compradors announced their "merger" for the operation of the Ilijan LNG terminal, the first "integrated LNG import facility" built by the Atlantic Gulf & Pacific Company (AG&P) along the coast of Barangay Ilijan, Batangas. City. Meralco PowerGen, Aboitiz Power and San Miguel Global Power (SMGP) converged to buy the said facility for \$3.3 billion (₱184 billion).

The Ilijan LNG terminal covers nine hectares of land and up to 700 meters of the sea from the coast for a "floating storage" of LNG (liquefied natural gas). Apart from the port and storage, it will also serve as a facility for "regasification" (the process of transforming LNG from its liquid form to its original gas form). The facility will supply natural gas to the San Miguel Corporation (SMC)-owned giant power plant being constructed.

This facility and plant is among the 12 "terminals" and 35 new energy plants planned to be built to handle imported LNG and diesel. Seven of the terminals and eight of the new plants are slated to be built along the Batangas coast, in front of the Verde Island Passage (VIP). Others will be built in Leyte, Navotas City and Zamboanga. One of the LNG plants, planned to be

built along the Tañon Strait in San Carlos, Negros Occidental, was temporarily blocked by protesting residents, churchgoers and environmental groups. Many of the LNG projects are championed by the SMC, in partnership with Japanese, American and British multinational institutions and banks.

Currently, there are six LNG plants operating in the country, and five of them lie along the Batangas coast.

## Dumping US surplus LNG

The Philippines opened LNG imports from 2021 amid the reported imminent exhaustion of natural gas reserves in the Malampaya gas fields by 2027. The US used this opportunity to push the country to import LNG.

The US has been the world's leading producer of LNG since 2011.

It surpassed Russia, Australia and Qatar to become the number one exporter for the first time in December 2023. This is mainly due to the US seizure of Western Europe (Germany, France, UK, and others) markets for LNG that used to flow through Russian pipes. In addition to the US imposing sanctions against the purchase of LNG from Russia since the Ukraine war broke out, it blew up the Nordstream pipeline to prevent the smuggling of LNG. LNG terminals had to be built to store the LNG from the US that is being transported to Western Europe on large tankers.

As a direct result of the US proxy war with Ukraine, LNG prices have skyrocketed to \$40 per million British thermal units (mmBtu) by 2022. However, US LNG overproduction has dragged the global market price down to \$9.80 per mmBtu in 2023.

The US is now desperate to open new markets and monopolize old markets in Asia to dump its LNG surplus and keep demand and prices high. American companies such as ExxonMobil, Novatek and Chevron are most interested in importing LNG.

Although the price of LNG in the international market has dropped, it is only temporary and does not mean lower electricity bills in the Philippines. In 2023, imported LNG was \$1-\$3/mmBtu more expensive than domestic natural gas. The Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis estimates that the price of energy produced from imported LNG is around 9 per kilowatt hour (kwh) to 16/kwh. This is higher than the average 7.38/kwh energy produced using the similarly imported coal and diesel in

*"Imported LNG..." continue on page 10*



"Imported LNG..." from page 9

2023, and ₱4.4/kwh using local solar power.

Despite definitely higher charges, the Department of Energy still required all distributors to source electricity from plants using imported LNG. According to the "energy map" of the Marcos regime, the Philippines will increase the use of imported LNG and "renewable" energies from 29% (of which 13% is LNG) to 35% by 2030 and 50% by 2050.

### **Threat to the VIP and livelihood of fisherfolks**

LNG is marketed as a "transition fuel" being supposedly cleaner compared to coal and diesel. However, it still creates greenhouse gases (GHG) such as methane, carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide. In fact, studies show that the methane it produces is more harmful to the environment, because it is more potent in trapping heat in the atmosphere by 80-100 times longer than carbon dioxide.

Construction of the Ilijan LNG terminal started at the height of the pandemic (2021) and completed in 2023. It was built by AG&P, a company based in the United Arab Emirates, in partnership with Osaka Gas and the Japan Bank for International Cooperation. In February, American company Nebula Energy bought AG&P's LNG-focused division.

In concurrence with the Ilijan LNG terminal, SMGP is now building the Batangas Combine Cycle Power Plant in Sta. Rita, Batangas. Although separate projects, the two facilities are connected and face the same side of the VIP.

Environmental group's study show the two facilities, and others similar projects, threaten the VIP ecosystem that scientists consider the "richest marine habitat" in the world. During construction alone, sediment and sand already affect the seas beyond the scope of the facility. Construction disrupted the cycle and habitat of fish and other marine life not only in its immediate area, but throughout the entire VIP. This has resulted in a further decline in the quality of coral reefs and a decline in the catch of fisherfolks.

Aside from damaging the sea, AG&P also faces a case of illegal conversion of agricultural lands in the barangays of Ilijan and De La Paz. It also has cases of illegal cutting of coconut trees in the area. In fact, the Department of Agriculture issued a "cease and desist order" against the company last year due to its lack of a land conversion permit. AG&P and the Japanese banks ignored the order.

Hundreds of fisherfolks in Batangas have long been affected by the operations of the First Gen and SMC power plants. Before the new plants and facilities began construction, their last fish (tulingan and galunggong) catches have been halved since 2019. They were further constricted when fishing was banned from the shores near the construction.

In addition, residents fear the possible leakage of LNG into the ocean, more so because the VIP is vulnerable to strong and severe typhoons. VIP has not yet recovered, and may never recover, from the damage caused by the oil spill from the SMC-chartered vessel, the MT Princess Empress, last year.

Batangas air and water will become even more polluted once the coast is peppered with dirty energy plants. Marine life will also be more disturbed by increased traffic of imported LNG delivery ships.

Many coastal communities will lose their source of livelihood and even their homes. As many as two million Filipinos directly depend on the VIP for their livelihood.

### **US officials arrive in the country this March**

PROTESTS met the arrival of Anthony Blinken, secretary of the US Department of State, in Malacañang on March 19. Blinken was in the country to meet with Ferdinand Marcos Jr and the AFP on the upcoming Balikatan wargames and to again push the Indo-Pacific Security Strategy, the US strategy to maintain its hegemony in Asia against its rival China.

Before Blinken, high-ranking US economic and military officials arrived in the country almost simultaneously this March.

Gina Raimondo, US department of commerce secretary, led the Presidential Trade and Investment Mission delegation sent by the US government to peddle the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, a key part of the Indo-Pacific Security Strategy. Raimondo's delegation included 22 heads of large American companies, including two construction companies (Bechtel, Black & Veatch) that build US naval bases and military facilities in various countries.

Adm. John C. Aquilino, commander of the US Indo-Pacific Command, also arrived in the Philippines for meetings with Marcos, defense secretary Gilbert Teodoro and AFP chief Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr, along with other senior AFP officials.

They discussed preparations for Balikatan 2024, heralded to be the "biggest" in its history. It will be launched in Batanes and Palawan from April 22 to May 8. One of its "highlights" is the "integrated air missile defense exercise," or missiles flying in the direction of China. This is in accordance with the Strategic Defense Strategy and the Philippine role as bait in the first-island chain defense of the US.

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