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# Bayan

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

English Edition  
Vol. XLI No 3  
February 7, 2010  
www.philippinerevolution.net

Editorial

## Prepare the people for imminent anarchy during the elections

There are growing possibilities that the US-Arroyo regime's desperate schemes to cling to power will culminate in massive anarchy during the forthcoming elections. The Arroyo clique will exploit the ensuing chaos for its own ends and eventually seize power. This early, the Filipino people must be prepared to take action to thwart the ruling clique's schemes and prevail over whatever turmoil these schemes may spawn.

Gloria Arroyo wants her loyal puppet Gilberto Teodoro to be her successor so she can more effectively implement her post-election schemes. With the new president under her thumb, Arroyo expects to be able to push "Chacha" to pave the way for her takeover as prime minister under a new parliamentary government. The people, however have been thoroughly rejecting Teodoro and Arroyo's other candidates for national positions who have consistently been occupying the bottom rungs in every survey.

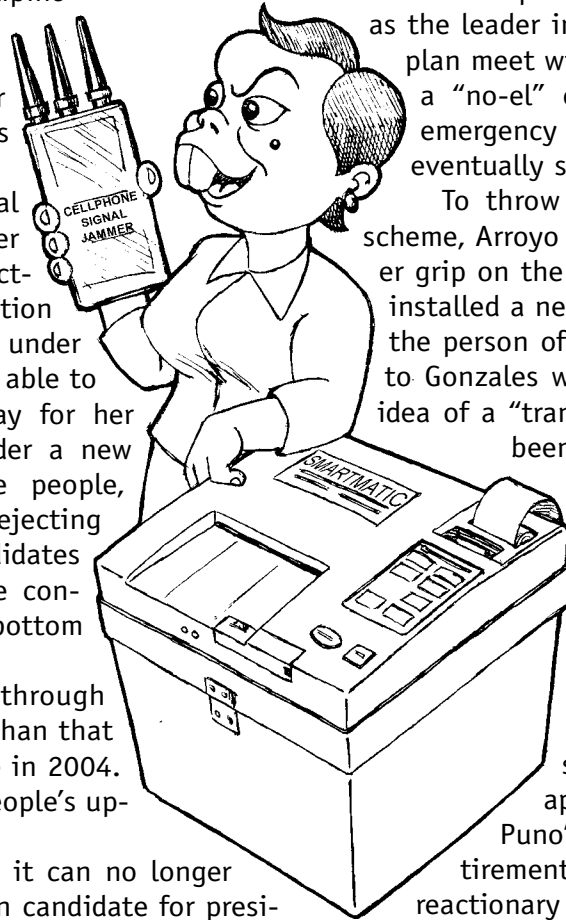
Teodoro can only "win" through fraud more massive and brazen than that perpetrated by the Arroyo clique in 2004. This will surely ignite another people's uprising.

The Arroyo clique fears that it can no longer stop the victory of an opposition candidate for presi-

dent. It has thus been cooking up a "no proclamation" scenario, where only winning candidates for the Lower House and local government positions will be proclaimed, and none for national positions. In such a scenario, Arroyo's gameplan is to represent the second district of Pampanga, become House Speaker and sit as the leader in a transitional setup. Should this plan meet with difficulties, Arroyo can shift to a "no-el" or no elections scenario, impose emergency rule or outright martial law, and eventually sit as "transitional president."

To throw the military's might behind this scheme, Arroyo has been making plans for a tighter grip on the reactionary army. She has already installed a new Secretary of National Defense in the person of National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales who has long been hardselling the idea of a "transition government." She has also been paving the way for installing her most loyal military officer Gen. Delfin Bangit at the helm of the reactionary army's leadership.

Arroyo has likewise been plotting to have greater control over the Supreme Court and appoint her most loyal justice as head of the highest tribunal. Thus, she has been pushing the idea of appointing Chief Justice Reynato Puno's replacement even before his retirement on May 17 even if the laws of the reactionary government explicitly state that



**This issue's highlights...**

**The dreaded "No-el"**  
PAGE 3

**NPA routs AFP's division-level operation in ICR**  
PAGE 3

**Triumphant peasant caravan**  
PAGE 5

she can not appoint a new chief justice unless the position is vacant, or appoint any government official for that matter two months before the elections up till the end of her current term on June 30.

The conditions for widespread anarchy in the coming polls is expected to result from the failure of election automation. This early, there already are many indications how this will come about. For one, the production and delivery of the counting machines are way behind schedule. Another major problem being anticipated is voters' confusion regarding the long ballot. And an even bigger problem is expected to arise from the clustering of several precincts. The training of teachers who will oversee the new voting system is already much delayed. There is also a formidable communications problem, which includes the absence of cellphone signals in many farflung areas and the threat of signal jamming to block the transmission of voting results.

Several problems have emerged in the field trials held recently in a number of areas, all presaging the widespread failure of the actual

elections. (*See related article*).

There are indications that the ruling regime will be blaming the revolutionary movement for the failure of elections.

The people are aware of the Arroyo clique's designs and the widespread anarchy that will ensue. The Filipino people will never allow themselves to fall for these schemes and be swallowed up by such anarchy.

Any attempt by the ruling clique to ram through with its schemes to remain in power will trigger more widespread and intense people's resistance, further conflict among the reactionary classes and a harder fall for the US-Arroyo regime. It will worsen all the more the political crisis of the ruling system and create new political conditions that will be even more favorable for revolution.

In the face of all this, the revolutionary and progressive forces must exert more effort to prepare the people to be ever vigilant and decisively resist and frustrate the Arroyo clique's sinister schemes.

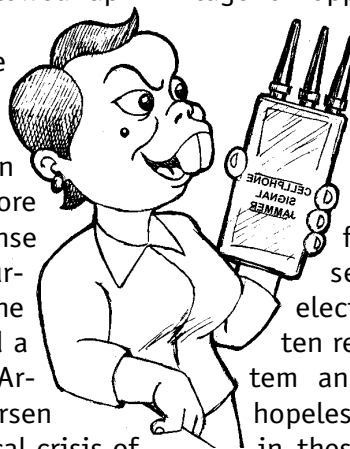
This early, they must prepare to confront the eruption of widespread anarchy in order to deal with it effectively and turn it into an opportunity to overthrow the Arroyo regime, assert the people's power and raise their resistance to a new and higher level.

The progressive and democratic forces are effectively taking advantage of opportunities to advance

the people's interests through parliamentary struggle and reactionary elections. Nonetheless, there must be continuing efforts to expose the essence of reactionary elections as part of the rotten reactionary political system and the limitations and hopelessness of participating in these exercises. The looming possibility of a failure of the coming elections and the anarchy this will set off will serve as a big lesson in the rottenness of reactionary politics and elections.

We always put stress on exerting allout efforts to arouse, organize and mobilize the people from day to day and strengthening direct mass struggles in the streets, factories, farms, schools, communities and wherever people congregate. The revolutionary and progressive forces must likewise prepare to swiftly seize emerging opportunities for the people to directly take collective action and unleash and exercise their power whenever and wherever possible.

We must at the same time invigorate revolutionary armed struggle. We must strengthen the New People's Army and intensify its tactical offensives in order to take advantage of the turmoil within the reactionary ruling system and do our utmost to advance people's war to a higher level. **AB**



Vol. XLI No. 3 February 7, 2010

Ang Bayan is published in Pilipino, Bisaya, Iloko, Hiligaynon, Waray and English editions.

It is available for downloading at the Philippine Revolution Web Central located at:

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

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## Contents

<b>Editorial</b>	
Prepare the people for imminent anarchy during the elections	1
The dreaded "No-el"	3
<b>Victorious NPA offensives</b>	
NPA routs the AFP's operation in ICR	3
10 firearms seized in NPA offensives	4
Criminal charges against Bacolod police	5
Triumphant peasant caravan	5
Significance of the FQS of 1970	6
Ka Douglas passes away	7
Peasants in Negros launch hunger strike	8
Skyrocketing sugar prices	8
Massive layoffs in Japan, US and UK	9
UP and FEU students hold walkouts	9

Ang Bayan is published fortnightly by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines



## The dreaded "No-el"

A group advancing political change in the Philippines called for the strict monitoring not only of electoral fraud but of the dreaded schemes and looming danger of a failure of elections this coming May. According to Pagbabago!, there is a growing possibility of a "no-el" or "no-elections" scenario that will lead to the imposition of martial rule in the country.

This apprehension grew when the precinct count optical scanners (PCOS) which will be used by the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) in the country's first ever automated polls failed several times during field trials. According to Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) secretary general Renato Reyes, COMELEC and Smartmatic-TIM personnel obviously lack the readiness to handle problems that may arise in the process of election automation. Smartmatic-TIM has been contracted by COMELEC to provide the machines for election automation.

The contract between the COMELEC and Smartmatic-TIM calls for field trials of as many as 82,000 PCOS to be completed before the end of February. At present, only 72 have been tested, with many of them showing defects in reading ballots and transmitting results. The latest field trials were conducted in Pateros and Taguig in Metro Manila and in South Cotabato.

The emerging defects in the machines' functionality and in the election automation system have spurred Rep. Satur Ocampo of Bayan Muna to call on the people to be ready for a possible failure of elections. Ocampo also stressed that the people must defend their votes and their rights. He said that whether or not election automation materializes, it is important that the people maintain their vigilance against maneuvers like those that occurred during the 2004 elections where Gloria Arroyo "won" through massive fraud. In a pastoral letter issued on January 25, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) also called on the people to be vigilant against the "no-el" scheme.

The looming possibility of a failure of elections was further substantiated when the COMELEC itself reported that 5,000 cellphone jammers have been brought into the country. The jammers can block and delay cellphone signals through which voting results will be transmitted to the COMELEC's offices. The delay in transmission can be exploited in vote padding and vote shaving operations, said the COMELEC.

Also according to Fidel Agcaoili, who chairs the Human Rights Committee of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) Negotiating Peace Panel, the US-Arroyo regime through National Security Adviser and National Defense Secretary Noberto Gonzales is paving the way for Gloria Arroyo's continued rule. Agcaoili said that the AFP and PNP will commit human rights violations in the run-up to the coming May elections and blame it on the revolutionary movement in order to foment trouble and use this as a pretext to enforce martial law in the country.

AB

## NPA routs AFP's division-level operation in ICR

The New People's Army (NPA) in the Ilocos-Cordillera Region is routing the AFP's division-level military operation being launched as part of the preparations for the US-RP Balikatan Exercises. The exercises will be held in the provinces of Ilocos Sur, Mountain Province and Abra this February.

The enemy offensive is also part of the AFP's "end-game" as it insists on pursuing its pipe dream of crushing the revolutionary movement or reducing it to insignificance by the end of the ruling regime's present term in June 2010. But instead of dealing a death blow to the NPA in the region through this massive military operation, the AFP has been bleeding profusely from consecutive strikes by Red fighters.

According to the latest reports from the field, the enemy has sustained at least 65 casualties since the AFP 5th Infantry Division started its sweeping attack in the region in the last week of January. Twenty-six soldiers have already been killed and 36 wounded while one Red fighter was martyred.

The AFP is now shrewdly concealing from the media the de-





tails of its large-scale military operation in the region to prevent the disclosure of its actual number of its casualties.

Following are the latest reported gunbattles:

**In Kalinga.** Three AFP troops were killed and two wounded when guerrillas from the NPA Lejo Cawilan Command ambushed a unit of the 21st IB in Mabaca, Balbalan. Two M16s and hundreds of rounds of ammunition were seized by the NPA from this tactical offensive.

**In Abra.** Twenty enemy troops were killed and 30 wounded in a series of ambushes by units of the Agustin Bagnalen Command (ABC) on the 41st and 50th IB.

On February 2, nine troops of the 41st IB were killed and 11 wounded when they were ambushed by a unit of the ABC in Barangay Lat-ey, Malibcong.

Prior to this, five soldiers were killed and nine others were wounded when they were ambushed by Red fighters of the ABC in Kili, Tubo on February 1.

At 9 a.m. on January 31, a soldier was killed and two wounded when the ABC ambushed operating units of the 50th IB in Kili, Tubo.

At 4 p.m., the ABC ambushed 41st IB troops at the boundary of Barangay Lat-ey and Barangay Mataragan in Malibcong, killing five soldiers and wounding eight more troops.

**In Mountain Province.** Six elements of the 54th IB were killed and four wounded when a unit of the NPA Leonardo Pacsi Command ambushed a platoon from this military unit in Mt. Bato, Mainit, Bontoc on January 27. With the help of the masses, the NPA succeeded in crippling the "elite platoon" led by

1Lt. Victor Leopoldo. The NPA confiscated an M16, a telescope and other military equipment.

The AFP retaliated like mad dogs when military air and artillery assets pounded nearby communities 11 times for the next three days, damaging the local waterworks, irrigation canals and rice fields.

The NPA Chadli Molintas Command in Ilocos-Cordillera said that AFP units scouring the forests, patrolling villages and bombing suspected NPA encampments are doomed to fail because the resulting human rights violations and the damage to livestock, crops and property only incur the people's ire. They will fail to inflict harm on NPA units that flexibly use guerrilla tactics to seize the initiative, dictate the tempo of battle and vanish from sight. **AB**

## 10 firearms seized in NPA offensives

**N**ine enemy forces were killed and 16 were wounded in a series of tactical offensives by the New People's Army (NPA) in Southern Tagalog, Bicol and Southern Mindanao from January 14 to February 4. Ten firearms were also seized by the Red fighters in these military actions.

**In Southern Tagalog.** An NPA platoon in Palawan raided a detachment of the Philippine National Police (PNP) in the town of Dumarán on the morning of February 4. The five policemen living in Barangay Sta. Teresita in Dumarán were taken by surprise when they were arrested one by one by the NPA guerrillas and used as guides in the attack on the PNP detachment that morning. At least five weapons were confiscated by the NPA—an M16, two .45s and two 9 mms. The Red fighters were at the detachment for 20 minutes. None of the policemen was hurt and the Red fighters safely withdrew.

**In Bicol.** A CAFGU element was killed and a soldier and another CAFGU element were wounded when they were ambushed by the NPA in Barangay Banuang Gurang, Donsol, Sorsogon on January 29. The casual-

ties were aboard a motorcycle. Before this, on January 27, members of the NPA Jose Rapsing Command confiscated five firearms from a military spy who was meted the death penalty in Barangay Tigbao, Aroroy, Masbate. The spy was using his firearms in criminal activities. The NPA confiscated a .45, an Ingram machine pistol, two .38s, a shotgun and rounds of ammunition.

An explosive device detonated by the people's guerrillas damaged the walls of a guard house of the 9th IB and the PNP-RMG in Barangay Armenia, Unson, Masbate on January 20.

On January 15, two soldiers of the 49th IB were killed when Red fighters opened fire on the military truck they were riding in Barangay Palogtok, Irosin, Sorsogon. That same day, four soldiers under the 9th ID were killed and six more were wounded when their vehicle was ambushed in Barangay Lalaguna, Mobo, Masbate.

A soldier was killed when the NPA ambushed a Re-engineered Special Operations Team (RSOT) of the 2nd IB in Barangay Taplacon, Camalig, Albay on January 14.

**In Southern Mindanao.** Seven elements of the 57th IB, including an officer, were wounded when the KM450 truck they were riding was hit by command-detonated explosives (CDX) in Barangay Old Bulatukan, Makilala, North Cotabato on January 26.

On January 21, a CAFGU element under the 72nd IB was wounded when his unit was ambushed in Barangay Coronon, Sta. Cruz, Davao del Sur by members of the NPA's Guerrilla Front 51. **AB**

## Youth activists file criminal charges against Bacolod police

PERSONNEL of the Negros Occidental Provincial Office Civil Disturbance Management Team (CDM-PNP 6) were slapped with a criminal case for brutally dispersing youth activists who were launching a protest action as Gloria Arroyo inaugurated the Teleperformance Global Marketing and Teleservices Solutions call center on Magsaysay Street, Bacolod City on February 3.

Kabataan Partylist-Negros coordinator Heinrich Pacheco was among those who sustained injuries to the back, thigh and hand when he was beaten with police truncheons in front of the San Antonio Abad Parish Church. The Kabataan Partylist strongly condemned the police brutality.

After the call center was inaugurated, Arroyo held a press conference which irked members of the media because they were told to ask questions only on information technology. Arroyo walked out when she was asked why her favored candidate Gilbert Teodoro was getting very low survey ratings. She later returned but still refused to answer the question. **AB**

# Triumphant peasant caravan

The ten-day national peasant march triumphantly ended at the historic Mendiola Bridge in Manila on the night of January 22. Ten thousand members of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), Pambansang Lakas ng Mamamalakaya sa Pilipinas (PAMALAKAYA), Anakpawis party and their allies asserted their demand for justice and genuine land reform.

The last day of this long march also coincided with the commemoration of the 23rd anniversary of the Mendiola Massacre. On January 22, 1987, thirteen peasants were killed and more than 100 were wounded when security forces of the Corazon Cojuangco-Aquino regime opened fire on thousands of peasants demanding genuine land reform. Until now, the victims have not been given justice.

Prof. Jose Ma. (Ka Joema) Sison, chair of the International League of People's Struggles (ILPS) praised the historic national caravan. He congratulated the peasants on their resolve and militancy in organizing the march which spanned more than 1,000 kilometers from Davao City in the south on Jan-

uary 12 and from Tarlac City in the north on January 16. The marchers converged at the office of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) in Quezon City on January 21.

Ka Joema said that it is just to demand land reform and free distribution of land to the tillers. Land reform must be realized on the strength of the peasant movement and for the purpose of attaining the economic, societal and

political liberation of the peasant masses. It should not be dependent upon the reactionary Congress.

Ka Joema criticized the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program Extension with Reforms (CARPER), saying that its aim is to dampen the peasant struggle for land and preserve feudal and semi-feudal exploitation.

The ILPS chair said that the local struggles of the peasants for land and the most outstanding agrarian cases such as in Hacienda Luisita, Hacienda San Antonio and Hacienda Sta. Isabel in Isabela, Hacienda Looc in Batangas and in the haciendas and plantations in Negros and Mindanao must be brought to national and international attention.

Ka Joema pointed out that presidential candidates like Benigno "Noy" Aquino III and Gilbert Teodoro

both come from the same landlord clan which owns vast haciendas in Tarlac, Pangasinan, Isabela, Negros, Caraga and Palawan.

Also according to Rep. Satur Ocampo of Bayan Muna, who spoke before the marchers, Noy Aquino must know and admit that his mother, former president Corazon Aquino failed to implement genuine land reform. In conjunction with this, because he wishes to become president of the



country, he should correct that failure, said Ocampo.

The marching peasants were unmindful of the fatigue, heat and thirst, said Danilo "Ka Daning" Ramos, KMP secretary general, because of the ardent support from the people lining the streets they passed and those that distributed bread and water, such as what happened when they passed through Cabuyao, Laguna. They also received support from the church sector.

Aside from the issue of land, the peasants condemned the brutal Oplan Bantay Laya 1 and 2 of the US-Arroyo regime and called on the presidential candidates to stop extrajudicial killings in the country and other human rights violations. They said that the country does not only need a good leader but a leader whose hands are not drenched in the blood of the peasants and other critics.

When the peasants convened at the DAR office in Quezon City on the night of January 21, the mobilization grew to 8,000. It became an evening of progressive and national songs, poems, plays and speeches. Thousands of flames blazed in the torch parade carried out by the peasants. The next day, January 22, the number of protesters grew to 10,000 when other rallyists from the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU), Anakbayan, LFS, GABRIELA, Alliance of Concerned Teachers, BAYAN and Bayan Muna joined in. From DAR in Quezon City, they marched towards the Mendiola Bridge where they burned 1,500 pictures of Gloria Arroyo and a seven-foot high effigy of "backhoe Gloria" as a symbol of the fierce loathing that the peasants and the majority oppressed and exploited people have towards Arroyo. AB

## Significance of the First Quarter Storm of 1970

*The following are excerpts from the statement of Prof. Jose Maria "Ka Joema" Sison, founding chairman of the Kabataang Makabayan and Communist Party of the Philippines on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the First Quarter Storm on January 25, 2010.*

**F**orty years have passed since one of the most historic uprisings of students and youth from the ranks of workers, urban poor and peasants in the Philippines. The "First Quarter Storm" was a major node in the development of the new democratic revolution in the Philippines," said Ka Joema, one of its leaders. He said that the achievements of the Philippine revolution since 1970 would not have been possible without this storm. "We owe to it the emergence and development of so many cadres and mass activists and the growth of the revolutionary forces on a nationwide scale."

The First Quarter Storm of 1970 was the highest point of the legal democratic mass movement for national liberation and democracy before the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus in 1971 and the declaration of martial law in

1972. It put forward the patriotic and progressive demands of the people against US imperialism and the local exploiting classes.

It resounded with the fighting slogans, "Makibaka, Huwag Matakot! Digmang bayan ang sagot sa martial law! (Fight! Don't be Afraid! People's war is the answer to martial law!)". It raised the fighting spirit of the broad masses of the people against the US-directed Marcos regime and against the repeated threats of the regime to declare martial law. It pushed the organized forces of the national democratic movement to accelerate their political and organizational work among the people.

The First Quarter Storm of 1970 was an unprecedented peak in the advance of the cultural revolution of the new democratic type, which called for a national, scientific and mass culture



within the framework of the people's democratic revolution led by the working class. It was the product of a decade-long ideological and political work among the students and other youth and among the working people by the young proletarian revolutionaries.

It further generated and reinvigorated a new wave of study and mass work among the youth along the line of new democratic revolution. Schools for national democracy were organized and conducted at all offices of the Kabataang Makabayan, on campuses, in the vicinity of factories, in communities and in all types of public places. Cultural works were created and presented to the youth and people in order to raise higher the level of their revolutionary consciousness and militancy.

The First Quarter Storm of 1970 resulted in the political education of great numbers of people and their recruitment into the Kabataang Makabayan and other types of mass organizations. On the basis of the rapidly growing mass movement, hundreds and then thousands of mass activists were educated and recruited to become members of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).

Consequent to the First Quarter Storm of 1970, the Kabataang Makabayan became a stronger engine for developing mass activists among the students and intelligentsia and among the young workers and peasants on a nationwide scale, for building revolutionary trade unions and for sending the educated youth and workers to the countryside for service in the New People's Army and in the rural communities.

The First Quarter Storm of 1970 was the key to the accelerated growth of legal mass organizations and such revolutionary

forces as the CPP, NPA and the main components of what would become the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). When the Marcos regime imposed martial law and fascist dictatorship on the country, the revolutionary forces and people were more determined than ever to wage protracted people's war along the national democratic line.

We must celebrate the great significance and continuing relevance of this historic event. We must renew our resolve to carry forward the Filipino people's democratic revolution against US imperialism and the local exploiting classes of big compradors and landlords.

We must step up the study movement and cultural work along the line of the new democratic revolution. We must enlighten and arouse the people by using all means of information, education and artistic expression. We must recruit more people into the patriotic and progressive mass organizations, especially those of the workers, peasants, women and youth. We must mobilize a far greater number of people to engage in various forms of struggle against the US-Arroyo regime and the entire semicolonial and semi-feudal ruling system.

We face today the worst crisis of the world capitalist system since the 1930s because of the US-instigated policies of "neoliberal" globalization and imperialist aggression and terrorism. The broad masses of the people suffer conditions of exploitation and oppression far worse than four decades ago. These intolerable conditions drive the people and the revolutionary forces to fight more resolutely and militantly for their national and democratic rights and interests. **AB**

## Ka Douglas passes away

**D**ouglas Dumanon, Vice President for External Affairs of the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) has passed away. Ka Douglas died of throat cancer on January 25 at the age of 56.

Ka Douglas first became active during the First Quarter Storm (FQS) of 1970. He became a member of the Kabataang Makabayan (KM) at the Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila where he went to college. He was among those who were arrested and detained during martial law. When he was released in 1973, he became a KM organizer and the youth organization's deputy secretary for education.

He later became a labor organizer and was elected union president of the Luzon Stevedoring Corporation (Luzteveco) in Sta. Mesa, Manila in 1977. When the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) was founded in 1980, he was appointed its National Treasurer. He led Luzteveco's successful strikes and protests in 1982 and in the struggle against erroneous ideas and activities in the workers' movement in the 1980s and 1990s. When the majority of KMU leaders were arrested in 1982, he was one of those who held important responsibilities at KMU.

Ka Douglas was elected Vice President for Federation Affairs in 2003, a time when KMU had enjoyed ties and cooperative relations with various unions in 20 countries. He was also tasked to oversee the Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap (KADAMAY), one of the member federations of KMU. His leadership over KADAMAY and the urban poor was decisive especially in struggles such as that against the National

Government Center Housing Project and the Philippine National Railways Modernization and Rehabilitation Program (PNR-MRP). He was also active in forming various alliances and organizations in the communities and led mass actions like the "poor people's calvary" and

"poor people's march".

Before he became seriously ill, Ka Douglas was among the leaders of KADAMAY's Third National Congress in 2008. The congress paved the way for improving KADAMAY's leadership and operations nationwide.

At the tribute launched by KMU and KADAMAY on January 30, his colleagues described him as an exemplary worker-leader, an assiduous organizer and educator, proletarian and revolutionary.

Ka Douglas is survived by his wife and six children. **AB**

## Peasants in Negros launch hunger strike

**E**ight members of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) and the National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW) launched a hunger strike in front of the Negros Occidental provincial capitol from January 18 to 23.

They demanded the approval of House Bill 3059 or the Genuine Agrarian Reform Bill (GARB) and a stop to extrajudicial killings and the practice of criminalizing agrarian disputes, particularly those pertaining to ownership of lands covered by the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP).

They also demanded that the bandit paramilitary group known as the "Revolutionary Proletarian Army" (RPA) be disarmed and disbanded. They said that although the RPA is responsible for several extrajudicial killings and abductions in the province, the Philippine National Police has not done anything against it.

NFSW chair Isidro Castillo said that they launched the hunger strike to send a strong message to Malacañang and the provincial government that the peasants and farm workers in Negros are starving, landless and are being denied justice.

Their hunger strike was effective because after five days, the farmers were given the opportunity to have their grievances and demands heard.

KARAPATAN recorded 11 cases of extrajudicial killings of peasants and farm workers in Negros in 2009. Meanwhile, Castillo revealed that members of KMP and NFSW have been charged with criminal and civil cases such as robbery, usurpation of real property rights, grave coercion, robbery in band and forcible entry especially on lands

under CARP.

The criminalization of agrarian cases from 2009 up the present proves that the landlords and the courts are colluding with one another to reconcentrate land in the hands of landlords, said Castillo. The peasants will thus lose their right to till and the wages of farm workers in the haciendas will remain low. At present, farm workers in Negros receive only P60.00 to P100.00 per day. **AB**

## Skyrocketing sugar prices

**T**he peasant movement and progressive groups have been assailing the sudden skyrocketing of sugar prices and launching protest actions against it. White sugar now sells for P54.00-P60.00 per kilo.

The price of sugar began to shoot up on January 23 when it reached P52.00 per kilo from P48.00 on January 5 and P45.00 on December 22. Massive hoarding by exploitative sugar retailers combined with panic buying by consumers have also caused the price of bread to rise. Ten pieces of pandesal which used to sell for P30.00 now sells for P31.00 and bread loaves that used to retail at P50.00 are now worth P55.50.

The Arroyo regime is spreading the notion that sugar prices have shot up in the local market because sugar prices are sky-high in the world market and supplies are scarce at the same time. The truth is that sugar has enjoyed a surplus since 2003 and the Philippines has even been exporting sugar. It is also strange for sugar to be in short supply right in the middle of the milling season (January to March).

The regime is using rising sugar prices in the international market and claimed shortfalls in supply as pretexts to push for sugar importations in order to benefit its big sugar businessmen-cohorts.

Sugar importation is also a way for the regime to earn massive kickbacks from funds earmarked for importations, the same way the ruling clique made a killing from rice importation. Arroyo immediately ordered the importation of 150,000 metric tons of sugar and has allotted P2 billion for this purpose. **AB**



# Massive layoffs in Japan, US and UK

**M**ore than 15,700 workers of Japan Airlines Corporation (JAL) were retrenched in January due to the company's bankruptcy. JAL, which owes \$25 billion in debts was hit hard by rising fuel prices and decreasing passenger traffic. The largest airline in Asia only continues to operate because of a government bailout package worth more than ¥1 trillion (\$11 billion). The bailout deal includes provisions for a government takeover of the company. The Japanese government has already bailed out JAL three times in the past ten years.

JAL's debt is the fourth largest in the country's history. Its bankruptcy has sent JAL's stock values plummeting by 90%.

The company's stocks are to be delisted from the Tokyo Stock Exchange on February 20. JAL's stocks are now reportedly worth a mere \$150 million, an amount not even enough to buy a Boeing 747. Its losses have also led the company to cancel more than 24 of its unprofitable routes.

**In the US.** Meanwhile, a record 196,000 workers are unemployed in the US, according to reports released in December 2009. This proves that the US economy has not yet recovered from the severe recession despite statements from the Obama regime that the economy is improving. At 10%, the unemployment is at its highest since the 1980s. Seven million workers have lost their jobs since the re-

cession started. In the goods-producing sector, 81,000 workers were laid off; 27,000 in the manufacturing sector; 53,000 in construction; 4,000 in the service sector; and 10,000 in retail. Twenty-one thousand government employees have also lost their jobs. Because there are no job vacancies, more than 661,000 people have also stopped looking for work.

**In the United Kingdom.** UK pharmaceutical giant GlaxoSmith-Kline announced this January that an additional 4,000 of its workers will be losing their jobs in the US and Europe. Its rival company, AstraZeneca will also be laying off an additional 8,000 workers worldwide in a cost-cutting move. **AB**

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## UP and FEU students hold walkouts

**S**tudents at the University of the Philippines-Los Baños launched a protest action on January 29 to oppose the administration's policy to increase the number of students in a classroom.

In the new practice dubbed "large class policy," UP will now allow up to 120-175 students per classroom from the former 25-40. The university administration claimed that the new policy would allow more students to attend college. But according to the Youth League for the Advancement of Democratic Rights (Youth Lead), the policy will worsen educational conditions at UP. It will reduce the participation of students in class discussions as well as the knowledge gained. This also reduces teaching time, which may result in widespread teachers' layoffs. They said that a huge budget should be set aside for education and that the university should raise teaching standards instead of implementing antistudent, antiteacher and anti-academic policies.

More than 1,000 students and teachers walked out from 7 am until 12 noon. They also submitted a man-

ifesto to the UP Board of Regents declaring their opposition to the policy and their demand to abrogate it. Prior to this, they also launched a week-long silent protest and "black shirt day".

Meanwhile, students and teachers of the Far Eastern University (FEU) in Manila also walked out of their classes on January 20. The action was launched to fight campus oppression, particularly the harassment of the teachers' union chair Joey Ting. The union is in the thick of negotiations for a Collective Bargaining Agreement that would grant higher wages.

Students of the University of the Philippines-Diliman also picketed the Commission on Higher Education (Ched) on February 5 to complain about the ongoing implementation of the "no permit, no exam policy" by university owners, despite Ched's issuance of a memo banning the practice.

Before this, Rep. Raymond Palatino of the Kabataan Partylist filed HB 6799 before Congress. The bill seeks to punish school owners who implement the "no permit-no exam policy". **AB**