

ANG

Bayan

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

English Edition
Vol. XLII No. 2
January 21, 2011
www.philippinerevolution.net

Editorial

Attain peace based on justice and progress

The preliminary talks between the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GPH) on January 14-18 in Oslo, Norway bore fruit as the two panels agreed to proceed to the formal talks on February 15-21 and implement a concurrent ceasefire.

The talks had been suspended for the past six years due to the Arroyo regime's collusion with the US to include the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), New People's Army (NPA) and NDFP chief political consultant Jose Ma. Sison in the US' terrorist listing. The regime also persistently violated past agreements and relentlessly waged counterrevolutionary war, sowed terror and perpetrated human rights violations. It likewise showed no interest in resolving the political, socio-economic and other roots of the civil war raging in the country.

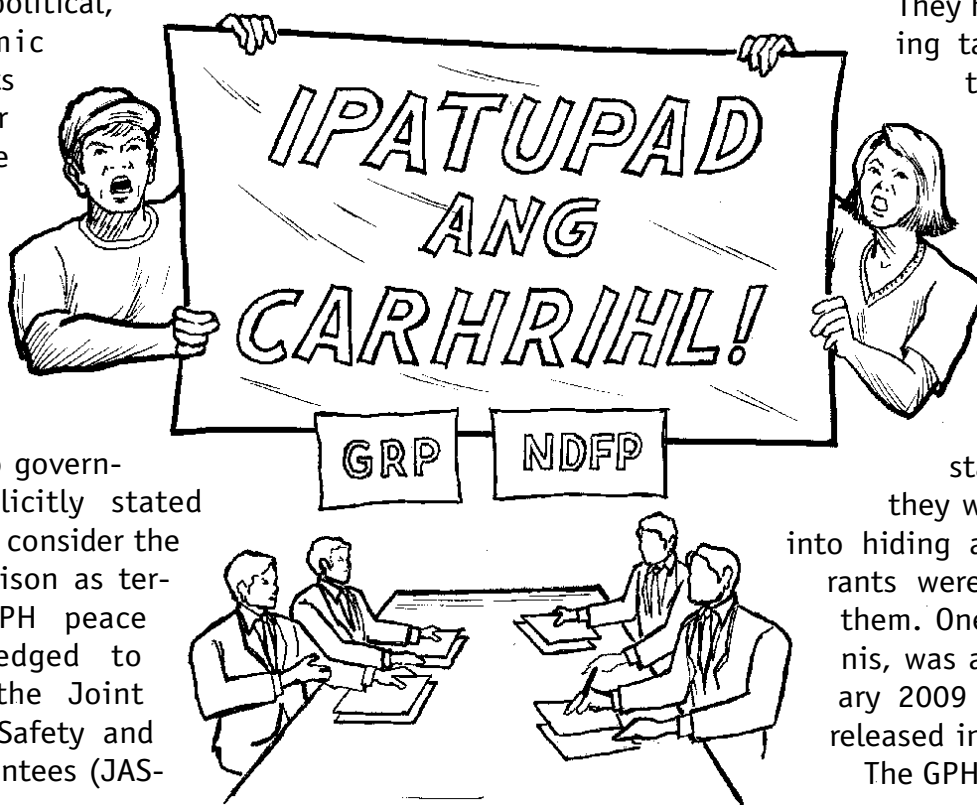
Albeit difficult, the preliminary talks have had positive results. For one, the Aquino government has explicitly stated that it does not consider the CPP, NPA and Sison as terrorists. The GPH peace panel has pledged to comply with the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JAS-

IG), which includes guaranteeing immunity from arrest of NDFP consultants who have gone into hiding and facilitating the release of detained consultants. The two sides also affirmed all previous agreements, agreed to commence negotiations on socio-economic reforms and revive the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) to oversee both parties' compliance with the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL). The GPH also expressed its openness to accede to the NDFP's demand to have other political detainees released.

The GPH peace panel agreed to guarantee the liberty and participation in the peace talks of three NDFP consultants (Rafael Baylosis, Randall Echanis and Vicente Ladlad).

They had been attending talks and consultations on various agenda related to the negotiations before being slapped with trumped-up murder charges. To avoid state persecution, they were forced to go into hiding after arrest warrants were issued against them. One of them, Echanis, was arrested in January 2009 and temporarily released in August 2010.

The GPH peace panel has



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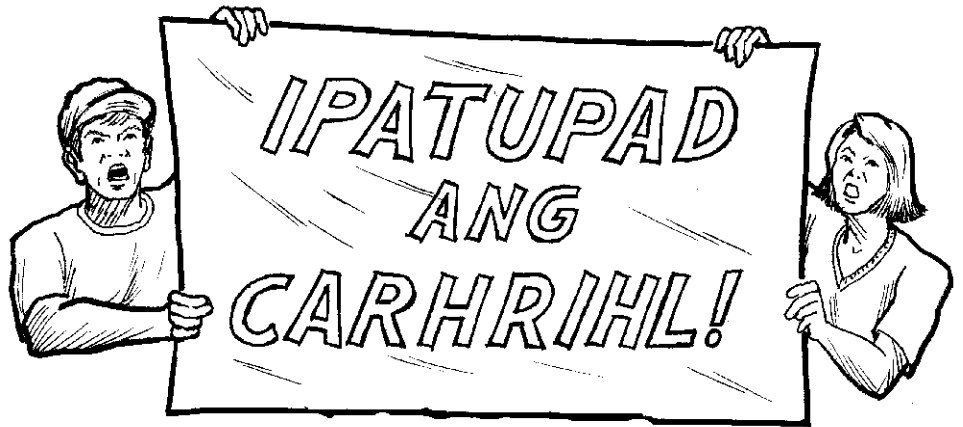
NPA seizes 15 firearms PAGE 7

also promised to expedite the release of 14 other consultants within the first two rounds of the formal talks. They are Emerterio Antalan, Jovencio Balweg, Edwin Brigano, Pedro Codaste, Edgardo Friginal, Angelina Ipong, Randy Malayao, Alfredo Mapano, Glicerio Pernia, Maria Luisa Pucray, Eduardo Sarmiento, Eduardo Serrano and Jaime Soledad. All of them are NDFP consultants who were arrested after the Arroyo regime suspended its compliance with the JASIG in 2004. Added to this list is Tirso "Ka Bart" Alcantara, the Southern Tagalog region's representative to the peace talks, who was arrested on January 4 under the Aquino regime, even after the GPH had resumed compliance with the JASIG.

Considering the ruling regime's reactionary character and the sheer number of issues that have to be resolved and over which the GPH must be held accountable, the NDFP must continuously demand and ensure the GPH's fulfillment of its promises. This, the NDFP must do before forging other agreements.

Foremost among the agreements that the GPH must comply with are the JASIG and the CARHRIHL.

Aside from the release of detained NDFP consultants and



staff, the NDFP has requested that the GPH comply totally with the JASIG by stopping criminal proceedings against consultants and other JASIG-protected NDFP personnel to enable them to freely participate in the peace negotiations. Many of these consultants had been branded as "enemies of the state" and slapped with trumped-up charges under the previous regime's "legal offensive."


The NDFP must also demand from the GPH the release of CPP, NDFP and NPA officers and members arrested during the December 16-January 3 ceasefire. Their arrests while traveling, visiting loved ones or seeking medical attention are but a few of the many violations of the GPH armed forces to the provisions of the concurrent ceasefire.

There are other issues re-

garding compliance with the JASIG that must be raised in future talks. The Aquino government must solve the abduction of other NDFP consultants, among them Leo Velasco, Rogelio Calubad and Prudencio Calubid and their staff. One of Calubid's companions who was able to escape has testified on how they were seized and tortured and how his comrades were summarily executed. The abduction and torture of NDFP consultants and staff and the continued refusal to surface them is a despicable violation of the JASIG and CARHRIHL and the overall peace process.

In accordance with the CARHRIHL, the revolutionary forces also demand the immediate release of close to 400 political detainees, just as the Aquino regime had released around 400 military detainees who had rebelled against the Arroyo regime. The concrete methods of releasing the political detainees must likewise be discussed. Their release must not be conditioned on any form of humiliation, such as forced admissions of guilt.

The GPH must also comply with a long-standing provision of the CARHRIHL to indemnify victims of human rights violations under the Marcos dictatorship. The NDFP must extract a concrete commitment from the GPH to comply with this provision within the year. Giving proper indemnification to the victims forms but part of their quest for justice and is not be-

 Vol. XLII No. 2 January 21, 2011	
<p>Ang Bayan is published in Pilipino, Bisaya, Iloko, Hiligaynon, Waray and English editions.</p> <p>It is available for <i>downloading</i> at the Philippine Revolution Web Central located at: www.philippinerevolution.net.</p> <p>Ang Bayan welcomes contributions in the form of articles and news. Readers are likewise enjoined to send in their comments and suggestions for the betterment of our publication. You can reach us by email at: angbayan@yahoo.com</p>	
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Ang Bayan is published fortnightly by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines	

ing done in exchange for withdrawing all cases against the Marcoses. Granting indemnification to opportunist groups whose only interest is to claim the money and abandon all demands for justice does not constitute compliance with the CARHRIHL.

The masterminds and main perpetrators of extrajudicial killings, abductions, torture, terrorism and other fascist crimes against activists, serious critics of the regime and even innocent persons must be prosecuted, tried and punished. The Arroyo regime's human rights violations as well as continuing violations under the current regime must be immediately and systematically investigated, and the assistance of human rights organizations sought for this endeavor.

There must be continued vigilance and opposition to the maneuvers and dirty tactics of ultra-reactionaries and militarists within the Aquino regime who want their counterrevolutionary policies and measures to prevail and their fascist crimes, human rights violations, demonization of the revolutionary movement and derailment of the peace process to continue.

Even as the Aquino regime's declaration that it does not consider the CPP-NPA as terrorists is already positive, it should not stop at this. The Aquino regime must also undertake decisive measures to thoroughly do away with the results of the Arroyo regime's collusion with the US and other imperialist powers to falsely and maliciously include the CPP and NPA in their lists of "foreign terrorist organizations."

The NDFP faces a reactionary regime in the peace talks, with both parties holding diametrically opposing views on many issues, including the fundamental socio-economic issues that comprise the next substantive

CPP slams 'midnight arraignment' for Ka Bart

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) assailed the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) for attempting a "midnight arraignment" of National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) consultant Tirso "Ka Bart" Alcantara.

"Ka Bart was rushed to RTC Branch 59 on January 19 for an instant arraignment in violation of his legal rights, as neither he nor his lawyers were informed about it," said the CPP. Executive Judge Eloida de Leon-Diaz was, however, compelled to postpone the arraignment to March 1 after Ka Bart refused the services of a court-appointed lawyer.

"Obviously, it was an attempt to preempt an agreement to have Ka Bart and 12 other NDFP consultants released," said the CPP. "The diehard fascist and reactionary forces want to block Alcantara's inclusion in the list of NDFP consultants to be released by the GPH."

Meanwhile, the CPP denied military reports that members of the New People's Army attempted to rescue Alcantara on the night of January 18. The AFP claims to have arrested a certain Romulo Luna who was said to have gotten past sentry guards at Fort Bonifacio in Taguig City carrying a hand grenade. Luna was supposed to have two companions who remained outside the military camp and immediately fled after Luna was "caught."

The CPP laughed off the AFP reports. "There was no such thing as an attempt to rescue Ka Bart from detention. The Luna tale is obviously a crude and lunatic concoction by the AFP to impugn the legitimate demand of the NDFP to have Ka Bart immediately released and cover up the continuing violations of his rights as an NDFP consultant in the peace talks."

The CPP asked the media and other interested parties to continue investigating the military report. AB

agenda. The agenda will cover the difficult issues of land reform, national industrialization and assertion of national sovereignty.

The foreseen difficulties in the negotiations cannot be underestimated, and the outcome remains uncertain. The NDFP must be principled, sharp and determined in facing the many challenges it confronts in the peace talks.

Nonetheless, it must seize this opportunity to put forward the interests and agenda of the revolutionary forces and the people and attain whatever it can for as long as it sees hope from the GPH side to continue the peace negotiations.

It is important for both parties to continue with their goodwill measures in order to create the best atmosphere for the conduct of the peace talks. The NDFP must strive to attain the maximum benefit possible for the revolutionary movement and the people through negotiations without laying down their arms.

The surest means of advancing the peace process and laying a firm foundation for peace based on justice and progress is for the revolutionary forces and the people to continue gaining strength by firmly and perseveringly waging armed struggle and vigorous people's struggles. AB

CPP to challenge privatization program in the peace talks

The revolutionary movement will challenge the Aquino regime's privatization program in the forthcoming resumption of peace talks between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GPH) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). The CPP said it would demand the junking of the Public-Private Partnership Program (PPP) once the talks reach the socio-economic reforms phase.

The CPP demand was made in the face of a series of hikes in the prices of goods and services as a direct result of privatization, liberalization, deregulation and denationalization (PLDD) policies that began in the 1980s and are being perpetuated by the current regime. Benigno Aquino III approved in early January the raising of toll fees for the North Luzon Expressway (NLEX) and South Luzon Expressway (SLEX). The Aquino regime has rationalized the move, saying that the higher rates are in accordance with profit guarantees written into contracts with capitalist investors. Both NLEX and SLEX are being run by big foreign capitalists and their local business partners. The higher rates have triggered fare hikes by buses and other vehicles using these expressways.

Along with the toll fee increases, Malacañang has also approved higher fares for the MRT and LRT despite urgent demands from the people for the government to stop adding to their burdens. Train commuters are set to pay more than double the current fares starting March 1.

The regime's objective in raising MRT and LRT fares is to make these train lines attractive to the private sector. More than 75% of the stocks of the trains' operator Metro Rail Transit Corporation are set to be sold to the private sector.

The regime also plans to improve public television stations and the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR) to make them more attractive to investors. PAGCOR as well as RPN 9 and IBC 13 are among the entities lined up for privatization by the government, along with a 40-hectare lot owned by the Department of Health in Cebu, the 178-hectare Camp Aguinaldo and the 33-hectare Camp Crame in Quezon City. Aquino has already ordered an inventory of property and land owned by the various departments to determine what other government assets could be privatized.

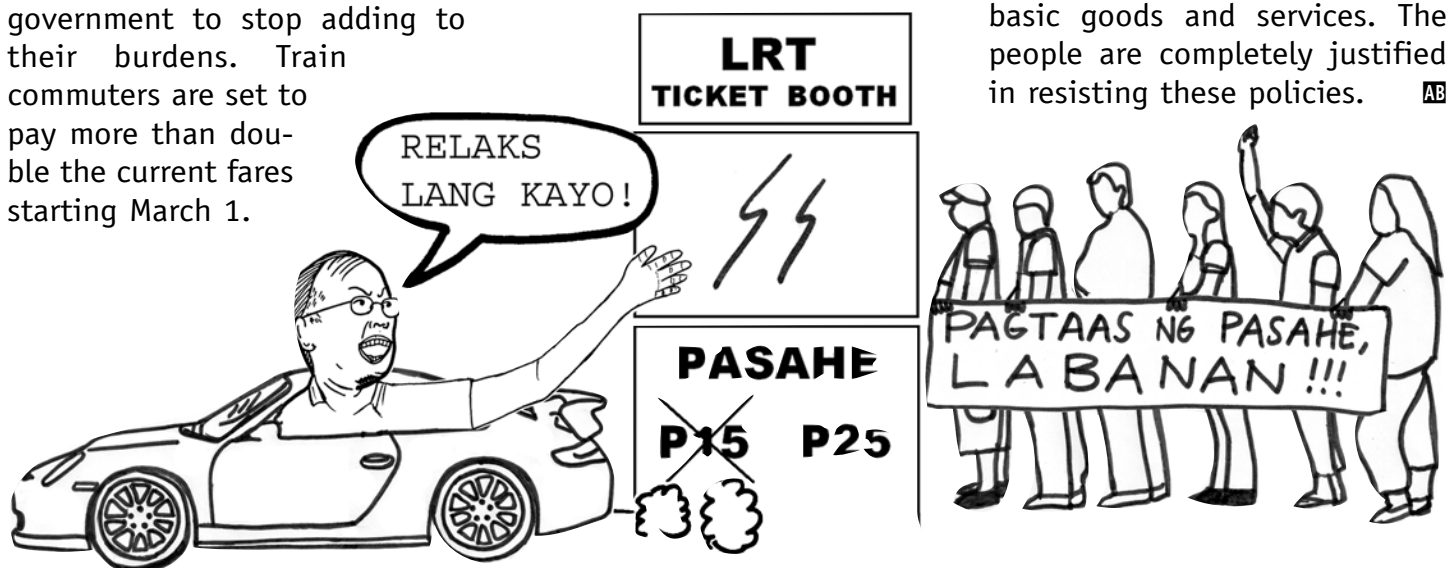
Meanwhile, there has been a series of oil price hikes, with oil

companies free to raise the prices of petroleum products at will since the deregulation of the oil industry. The prices of gasoline and other petroleum products have been raised almost on a weekly basis this January. Diesel prices are now at ₱39 per liter while unleaded gasoline sells at more than ₱50 per liter. The oil price hikes have pushed up transport fares and the prices of other commodities.

Even water rates in Metro Manila have been raised recently by concessionaires composed of foreign capitalists and their comprador business partners, while higher electricity rates have been a perennial problem for consumers.

The PLDD policies being enforced by the Aquino regime are dictates of the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and other financial agencies. These policies are meant to pave the way for investments by foreign big capitalists in key sectors of the local economy and give them free rein to amass superprofits. They are also meant to reduce government spending for social services and infrastructure.

Privatization policies have wrought unspeakable suffering in the last two decades of their implementation. People's levels of living are rapidly deteriorating in the face of the endlessly upward spiral in the prices of basic goods and services. The people are completely justified in resisting these policies. **AB**



Protests vs MRT, LRT fare hikes underway

Government plans to raise train fares at the Metro Railway Transit (MRT) and Light Rail Transit (LRT) and toll fees at NLEX and SLEX have been met with protest actions. Various sectors are set to launch mass actions to protest and condemn the more than 100% hike in train fares and looming bus, jeepney and taxi fare increases.

A youth alliance began a petition signing campaign on January 11 against fare hikes at the NLEX, SLEX, MRT and LRT Lines 1 and 2. The looming fare increases are unjust, according to the Strike the Hike Movement. Youth activists trooped to the LRT office along Recto Avenue in Manila to assail the Aquino regime's Public-Private Partnership (PPP) scheme which was behind the fare hikes.

That afternoon, the Derail the Hikes Alliance staged a noise barrage in various parts of Manila.

The Riles Laan sa Sambayanan (RILES Network), a broad organization of train commuters, students and the general public is also set to launch a series of protest actions, said main RILES Network convenor Sammy Malunes.

Representatives of progressive parties likewise plan to file a petition for a temporary restraining order at the Supreme Court against the MRT and LRT fare hikes set for implementation on March 1. Bayan Muna Rep. Neri Colmenares, who will be leading the team of lawyers that will file the motion said that the fare hike is not the solution to the train system's financial losses. Instead, it will only destroy the mass transport system because it will pass on the brunt of the hike to commuters. The government should, in fact, be subsidizing this transport system, he said.

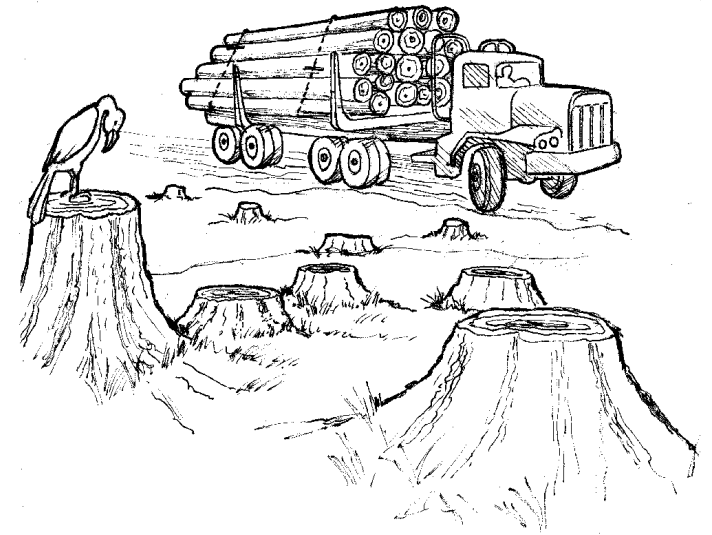
On the other hand, Gabriela Women's Party Rep. Luz Ilagan pointed out that the fare hikes were being implemented at a time when the public was already reeling from toll fee increases and hikes in the prices of gasoline, diesel, cooking gas, food, electricity and water, among others.

She said that instead of having the public shoulder the government's need for more revenue, the regime should run after smugglers and big businessman-tax evaders like Lucio Tan.

Act Teachers Party Rep. Antonio Tinio and Kabataan Partylist Rep. Raymond Palatino said the transport fare hikes will definitely push workers to demand higher wages so they could cope with the rising cost of living. **AB**

Aquino's total log ban proposal

Too little, too late



Reported plans by the Aquino government to totally ban logging are woefully inadequate to resolve the grave environmental destruction. Serious flooding and severe landslides now afflicting several provinces after prolonged rains pummeled the eastern part of the country have underscored the reality of widespread environmental ruin.

At least 60 people have been killed in the past few days and tens of thousands of families victimized by these calamities. Aquino's total log ban proposal is merely an attempt to save face after his government's failure to prevent disasters and extend assistance to hundreds of thousands of suffering victims.

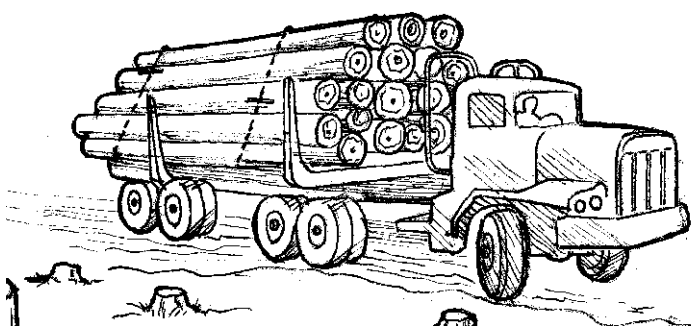
Proposals to totally ban logging have been mouthed by past regimes. But none of them had the determination to put a stop to widespread commercial logging. Aquino's proposal will likewise come to nought.

It is highly doubtful if Aquino would order a stop to the operations of San Jose Timber Corporation (SJTC) which is owned by Senate president Juan Ponce Enrile. The SJTC concession covers 96,000 hectares within the 330,000-hectare protected Samar Island Nature Park. It is also doubtful whether he would order the 76,000-hectare Surigao Development Corporation (SUDECOR) in Surigao del Sur to stop its operations, or whether he would take steps to stop widespread logging operations currently going on in the more than 10,000-hectare area covered by the Angara family's APECO project. *(see related article)*

The Philippines is one of the countries with the highest deforestation rates in the world. It has only seven million hectares of forest land left (or only 20% of its original forest cover).

Despite the grave depletion of the country's forests, the reactionary government continues to grant logging concessionaires the right to cut down trees for commercial use and for export. These companies destroy up to 100,000 hectares of forest land per year. The reactionary government has done nothing but prattle about protecting the forests.

On the other hand, the revolutionary movement has for years effectively enforced a ban on large-scale logging and mining operations that have plundered and devastated the environment and squandered the country's natural resources. Taking care of the remaining forests is being done effectively wherever the authority of the revolutionary movement and the people's democratic government prevails. AB



Mankayan residents put up barricades to stop mining operations

"WE will be on guard day and night," said a resident of Sitio Tabbak in Barangay Bulalacao, Mankayan, Benguet as he and other barriofolk put up barricades in the first week of January to prevent a mining company's drilling operations.

Residents of Tabbak are fiercely against drilling operations as this would soon be followed by large-scale mining operations if they don't put a stop to it now. Once the mines start operating, they fear the loss of their remaining source of water, the destruction of their livelihoods and possibly their entire community.

Indodrill, the company in question, is a subcontractor of Far Southeast Gold Mining Resources Inc. and Lepanto Consolidated Mining Company. In December 2010, Mankayan residents were surprised to find the presence of drilling equipment in their area. One-hundred and ten (110) residents immediately trooped to the village hall in Bulalacao to demand a dialogue with barangay officials. It was only then that they learned that the Benguet provincial government had granted Indodrill permission to operate in their community. AB

Fishefolk, minorities condemn landgrabbing in Aurora

Residents of Aurora province are up in arms against large-scale landgrabbing being perpetrated by the Angara political dynasty.

They angrily aired their views in a protest action on January 17 that was joined by up to 400 Dumagat tribespeople and small fisherfolk. The protest was held to coincide with the inauguration of a housing project attended by Sen. Edgardo Angara Sr., who authored the law that set up the Aurora Pacific Economic Zone Project (APECO). The housing project is reportedly meant for 450 families who have been displaced from the coastal town of Casiguran to give way to a free port being built as part of the APECO project.

The project is nothing but a massive landgrabbing scheme. From the original 500 hectares, APECO has been expanded to include up to 12,427 hectares of prime agricultural land in Casiguran and other coastal towns. The area covers 110 hectares allotted to land reform; some 300 hectares of irrigated and productive farms; residential areas of fisherfolk; and the ancestral lands of Dumagat national minorities.

APECO has also acquired for ₱120 million the logging rights of Industries Development Corporation and has in fact been rapidly clearing the forests and cutting down trees for APECO's various needs.

Among the project's most severe critics is the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines which has repeatedly urged

the Angara clan to desist from pursuing APECO.

The Angara political dynasty is led by Senator Angara, his son Rep. Edgardo "Sonny" Angara, Jr., and Aurora Gov. Bella Angara-Castillo, the senator's sister. AB





NPA seizes 15 firearms in Davao del Sur, ComVal

The New People's Army (NPA) seized 15 firearms in tactical offensives launched in Davao del Sur and Compostela Valley these past few days. Four enemy elements were killed and five were wounded in these firefights.

Red fighters from the Alex Ababa Front Operations Command (Front 71) disarmed a paramilitary group led by Barangay Chairman Ramon Dawata in Bolita village, Malita, Davao del Sur on January 18. The guerrillas seized three M16 rifles, an M14, a Garand, two carbines, an M79 grenade launcher, three 12-gauge shotguns and a cal .22 pistol, reported the NPA Valentin Palamine Operations Command in Far South Mindanao Region.

Dawata was killed in the operation when he was left resisting after his men in the Civilian Volunteer Organization and Barangay Defense System had surrendered to the NPA. Dawata has long been actively colluding with the AFP in the latter's military operations in the localities.

Troops from the 39th IB sent reinforcements to help the paramilitary forces but were themselves ambushed by another team of Red fighters. Five soldiers were wounded in the attack, among them the commanding officer (a 1Lieutenant Vallejos) and two of his sergeants.

Earlier, back to back ambushes were launched in Compostela Valley by the NPA Crucifino Uballas Command (CUC-Front 2) in Southern Mindanao Region.

The NPA seized two M16 rifles and an M203 grenade launcher in an ambush on a Reengineered Special Forces Team under the AFP's 3rd Special Forces Battalion. Killed were three soldiers who were aboard a motorcycle as they passed through Barangay Magdum, Tagum City on January 6.

The 10th ID claims that the soldiers were on their way to a "peace and development program" in the village. But the fact that they were armed to the teeth proves that their activities in Barangay Magdum had nothing to do with peace and development.

Two days after, another team from the CUC ambushed a platoon under the 71st IB in Sitio Darot, Barangay Libodon, Mabini, Compostela Valley, killing a soldier. AB



A festive celebration of the CPP 42nd anniversary in FSMR

More than 500 people attended a festive celebration of the Communist Party of the Philippines' 42nd anniversary in Far South Mindanao Region (FSMR) on December 26. The celebration was held at a village center in a farflung Lumad community in Tanggali Lhatian mountain in Davao del Sur.

It was the first time a celebration of this kind was held in this area. Most of those who attended came from the village, but some who came from neighboring barrios trekked for hours to be able to join the festivities.

The program began at around 10 a.m. when Ka Nonoy, a local Party cadre presented the overall state of the revolutionary movement nationwide and in FSMR and the CPP program's calls to attain the strategic stalemate (*estrategikong pagkapatas* in the local language, or ESPAT for short). When the Red fighters heard this, they began chanting "ESPAT! ESPAT! ESPAT!" followed by clapping by the masses. An old man commented, "Oh, if the strategic stalemate is just around the corner, then I might still live to see victory!"

After this, "creative theater" was staged, depicting the lives of Red fighters. Some presented dances depicting the situation and experiences of comrades. Others presented plays depicting the plight of peasants under a despotic landlord.

B'laan Red fighters also presented through *maral* (their tribe's traditional dance) the lives of the Lumad. To begin the *maral*, the guerrillas took a *malong*, a kerchief and a *katik* (percussion instrument made of bamboo) from a backpack. A four-year old boy darted towards the stage as the dance began, curiously taking a peek inside the backpack. But when he saw the comrades' dance movements, he imitated them, drawing laughter and applause from the crowd.

The cultural program was followed by games. At first, only the children joined in. But the adults soon followed suit. For the celebration, the usual parlor games were imbued with revolutionary content. One particularly enjoyable game was "*lihok aktibista*" (make like an activist), where participants tried as fast as they

could to put on the typical clothes and bring the unusual items associated with an activist on his way to organize the masses. This was followed by "lihok hukbo" (make like a Red fighter). In their version of the popular noontime variety show

game "Pinoy Henyo" (Filipino genius), contestants were asked to guess words usually used by the revolutionary movement.

The program ended at around 4 p.m. with the singing of the Internationale. AB

AFP, not NPA violated the reciprocal ceasefire

It was the soldiers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and elements of the Philippine National Police (PNP) who brazenly violated the reciprocal ceasefire declared by the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GPH) from December 16, 2010 to January 3, 2011.

This was NDF-Mindanao spokesperson Jorge "Ka Oris" Madlos' reply to the malicious editorial of one of the country's leading newspapers which echoed AFP accusations that the New People's Army (NPA) treacherously violated the ceasefire (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, January 9, 2011).

All units of the NPA strictly complied with the 19-day ceasefire, said Ka Oris. He also clarified that the two NPA tactical offensives cited in the editorial were launched outside of the scope of the ceasefire. The NPA ambushed a unit of the Philippine Army 63rd IB in Barangay Sta. Fe, Las Navas, Northern Samar on December 14, two days before the ceasefire. The NPA ambush of a team of the 3rd Special Forces Battalion in Magdum, Tagum City was undertaken on January 6, three days after the ceasefire.

On the other hand, even before the reciprocal ceasefire, AFP officers had already ordered units under their command to launch military operations with the so-called "Community Organizing for Peace and Development" (COPD) as cover. In the COPD, the military "invites" mass leaders for interrogation, with a number of them subjected to torture. This is in obvious violation not only of their human rights but of their basic rights as citizens, said Ka Oris.

Particularly in Mindanao, Ka

Oris cited incidents of ceasefire violations by AFP units in Surigao del Norte, Surigao del Sur, Agusan del Norte, Bukidnon, Sultan Kudarat, North Cotabato and Sarangani. The military set up random checkpoints along the highway in Surigao del Sur and Bukidnon to stop people from attending the celebration of the Communist Party of the Philippines' 42nd anniversary on December 26.

At the time the reciprocal ceasefire was in effect, AFP and PNP operatives arrested Comrades Pedro Codaste (North Central Mindanao Region) and Edwin Brigano (Southern Mindanao Region).

Following is a partial list of AFP violations of the reciprocal ceasefire in Mindanao:

December 16 up to the present. COPD operations continue without letup in the villages of Tinago, Bunyasan, Hagnadong, Cansayan, Masgad and Cantapay, all in Malimono town, and in Barangay Ema, Sison town, all in Surigao del Norte; as well as in the villages of Silop, Mapawa, Trinidad and Mabwa in Surigao City.

November 18-December 27. A long-term military operation was launched in Bislig City, Surigao del Sur covering the villages of San Agustin town and Sitios Mabog and Km 4 in San Roque town.

December 17-26. A military squad under the 8th IB conduct-

ed COPD operations in the mountainous areas of Barangay Sayawan, Impasugong, Bukidnon.

December 17-27. A Civilian Armed Auxiliary (CAA) detachment under the 23rd IB set up a checkpoint and searched everyone passing through Barangay Guilang-guilang, Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon.

December 17-31. Four platoons under the 8th IB scoured the mountainous areas of Barangay Matupi, San Fernando, Bukidnon.

December 8. A squad under the 73rd IB conducted military operations in Barangay Upper Suyan, Malapatan, Sarangani. The detachment in the area was reinforced with additional personnel in anticipation of the start of operations of the San Miguel Corporation-owned Looc Mining Co.

Soldiers ransacked and carted away personal belongings of a Lumad known only as Sumil. The military interrogated Sumil at gunpoint and asked him the whereabouts of a "Commander Boyax." When he answered that he didn't know, the soldiers seized his bolo and threatened to hack him.

A week before, the 73rd IB had already begun a series of military operations in Sitio Datalnay, Upper Suyan, victimizing several civilians. Among those harassed by the military were Lumad schoolchildren aged 7-13 years old. Soldiers seized and read the children's notebooks, looking for "lessons from the NPA."

Other civilians were harassed

Continued on "AFP..." on page 9

Peasant groups commemorate 24th anniversary of Mendiola Massacre

AFFILIATES of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) launched a series of protest actions to commemorate the 24th anniversary of the Mendiola Massacre.

KMP members launched a caravan on January 21 from the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) office in Quezon City going to Mendiola. They passed by the Department of Justice to call for the junking of the Stock Distribution Option in Hacienda Luisita and file a motion to reopen the Mendiola Massacre case. Farmers from Southern Tagalog and Central Luzon as well as other progressive organizations joined the protest action.

Peasants from the Katipunan ng Samahang Magbubukid-Timog Katagalugan and Alyansa ng mga Magbubukid sa Gitnang Luzon challenged Benigno Aquino III to reopen the Mendiola Massacre issue where 13 farmers were killed.

KMP deputy secretary-general Willy Marbella said that it is but proper to ask for a reopening because not one of the military or police officers involved has been punished. The massacre took place during the administration of Pres. Corazon Aquino, the current president's mother.

The KMP earlier rallied in front of Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City on January 20 to oppose Oplan Bayanihan and the continuing extrajudicial killings of farmers and activists. The KMP cited the killing of Oyi Villarosa, a peasant leader who was shot to death in Nueva Ecija this January, saying he was the first victim of Oplan Bayanihan. The progressive peasant organization also called for the release of detained peasant leaders Dario Tomada, Darwin Liwanag, Esmeralda Bardon, Felicidad Caparal and other political detainees.

On January 19, they rallied in front of the Batasang Pambansa to demand the repeal of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program Extension with Reforms (CARPER) and a stop to Charter Change (or cha-cha). The KMP slammed CARPER as an instrument to preserve landlord rule in the countryside and cha-cha as an instrument of foreign capitalists. Both have the objective of grabbing the farmers' lands.

Tunisian president ousted via massive protest actions

STRONG and sustained protest actions by the Tunisian people led to the ouster on January 14 of the country's president Zine al-Abidine ben Ali. The ousted strongman transferred political power to his prime minister.

There is massive unrest among Tunisians due to a grave economic crisis that has triggered widespread unemployment. Ben Ali and his wife (known as the "Imelda Marcos" of Tunisia) along with their extended families and cronies are also widely hated for their corruption as well as decades of repressive rule and persecution of their political enemies. Ben Ali ruled the country for 23 years.

The protests were ignited by a young vendor's act of self-immolation after Tunisian authorities attempted to seize his cart full of vegetables and fruits. In the succeeding weeks, up to 90 people died in almost a month of clashes between the people and armed minions of the Tunisian government.

Tunisia is a country in northern Africa bounded on the southeast by Libya and on the west by Algeria. Most of its people are Arabic.

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as well, such as Maling Baral, a 35-year old Lumad who was interrogated twice in six hours. According to the military, Baral was "likely" being assisted by the NPA because he had a large farm.

December 18. Troops from the 27th IB Alpha Company along with CAFGU elements patrolled a number of villages in Columbio, Sultan Kudarat, particularly Sitio Dam, Barangay Maligaya. The troopers entered Barangay Sinapulan on December 23 and harassed residents, most of whom oppose the operations of Xstrata-SMI, a huge foreign mining company.

December 23-27. Troops from the 68th IB Bravo Company and a number of CAFGU paramilitaries led by a 1Lieutenant Cebreón conducted foot patrols in a number of barangays in Batang and Genoveva Baynosa towns; and in Sitio Lambusong, Barangay Bacong, all in Tulunan, North Cotabato. They also combed through the villages of Bella Flores, Malabuan and Guangan, all in Makilala town. On the night of December 23, several residents saw soldiers taking up ambush positions in Genoveva Baynosa, near the Dole-Stanfilco banana plantation. The soldiers later proceeded to an upland sitio in Barangay Bacong.

December 30, at 3 p.m. up to dawn of December 31. A platoon under the 39th IB plus CAFGU elements positioned themselves in Barangays Macol and Sanghay in Malita, Davao del Sur. The military's presence caused fear among the locals.

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