

NPA harasses Balikatan prep troops

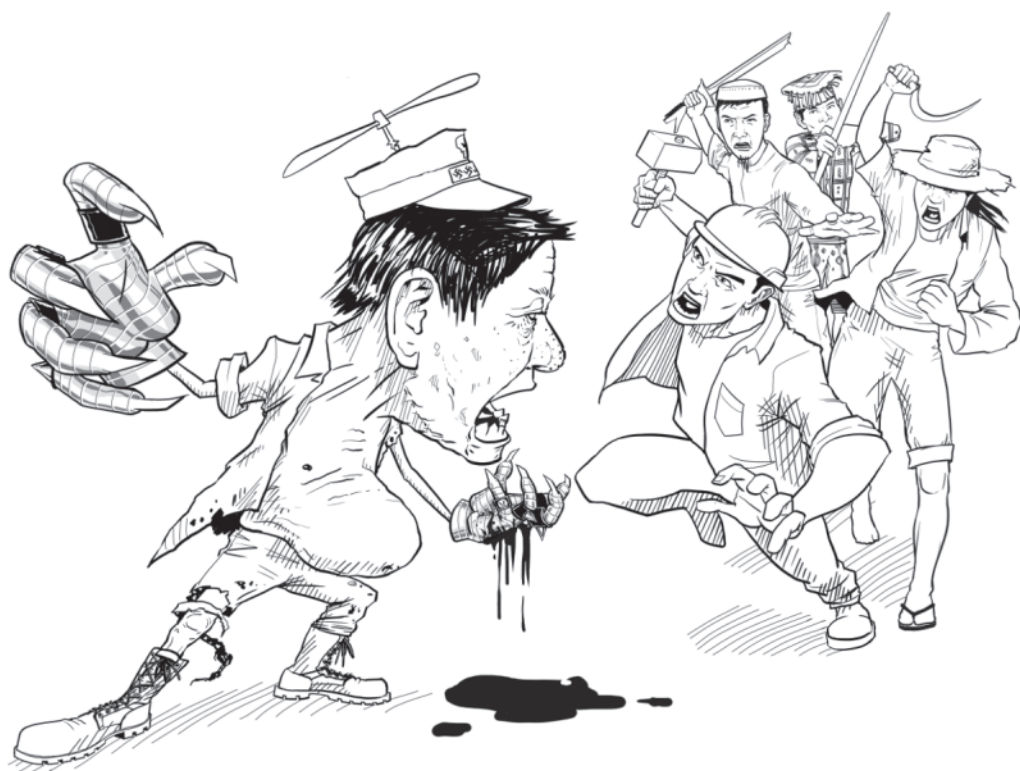
TWO CONSECUTIVE harassment operations were launched by the New People's Army (NPA)-Cagayan (Danilo Ben Command or DBC) against the operating troops who were preparing for the Balikatan exercises in Cagayan last April. The NPA-DBC first harassed a platoon of the Division Reconnaissance Company (DRC) of the 5th ID in Sitio Matartara, Barangay Gagabutan West, Rizal last April 21 around 6:30 in the morning. According to an initial report from the NPA-DBC, not less than ten soldiers were slain in the 30-minute gunfight.

On April 24 at around 7 in the morning, the NPA-DBC again launched a harassment operation against another platoon of the 17th IB of the 5th ID in Sitio Gruping, Barangay Mazi, Rizal. According to NPA-DBC, 14 soldiers were killed in the two-hour clash.

The DRC and 17th IB troops who were harassed are part of the advanced column and commando unit of the oversize company of troops from the DRC, 17th IB, Philippine Marines, PNP Regional Public Safety Battalion (RPSB) 2 and CAFGU that is currently operating in the barrios of Zinundungan Valley, Rizal.

Under the direct authority of the 5th ID, civil military operations (CMO) are being conducted in 6 towns (Santo Niño, Rizal, Lasam, Baggao, Allacapan at

...continued at page 3



EDITORIAL

End Mindanao martial law and Oplan Kapayapaan!

Mindanao has now been under martial law for almost a year. During this time, GRP President Rodrigo Duterte employed military power to mount a brutal war in Marawi City and a cruel war of suppression across the entire Mindanao. Throughout the country, the fascist military reigns over the vast countryside under Oplan Kapayapaan.

Millions suffer under Duterte's open fascist rule in Mindanao and the entire Philippines. Hundreds of barrios are targeted and occupied by fascist troops of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). Peasant leaders and activists are persecuted. Extrajudicial killings, including of children, are on the rise. Political abductions, arrests and imprisonment are rampant. There are increasing cases of sol-

diers looting of farm animals and other property of village folk. Without evidence, nearly 5,000 have been accused of NPA membership and enlisted as surrenderees by the AFP.

Bombings and shelling are relentless. Nearly half a million, including 400,000 from Marawi, have been forced to leave their homes. Tens of thousands of Meranaws are being barred from re-

turning to their homes which have been destroyed by AFP bombings. The AFP and US plan to claim a large part of Marawi is a great offense against the Moro people.

Duterte imposed and extended martial law in Mindanao to fully control the rich resources and allow it to be plundered by foreign mining and plantation companies. Duterte seethes with anger over peasants and minority people who know how to defend their farm land, their ancestral land and the nation's patrimony. He is extremely incensed as well with workers who struggle for their welfare and rights.

Duterte chose Mindanao knowing that there thrives a major part of the revolutionary armed movement, which is the biggest and strongest hindrance to his push to impose his tyrannical rule across the country. Duterte thinks that by fully employing state terrorism, he can silence Mindanao and rule in peace. But by suppressing Mindanao, he has roused the entire nation.

With martial law, Duterte

brandishes his tyrannical rule across the country. He employed the same martial law style in closing down Boracay ostensibly to clean up the island. Across the Luzon and Visayas countryside, Duterte also uses military power to suppress the peasant masses' struggle against various forms of feudal and semifeudal oppression and exploitation and prevent the advancement of the armed revolution.

There are no fewer than 500 political detainees, including more than a hundred arrested in the past year and a half under Duterte. More than 600 accused of being "terrorists" are under threat of arrest or liquidation. Several Party cadres have already been killed and abducted.

Despite Duterte's declaration more than a month ago to resume peace talks with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), he has yet to make any serious move to revive the negotiations. Instead of boosting the talks, Duterte seems to be averting it. He is imposing endless condi-

tions, including requiring the revolutionary forces to agree to a ceasefire even if there is no agreement yet on substantive reforms to address the issues at the root of the armed conflict.

While the NDFP is open to resuming negotiations, to seriously push the talks and to be flexible if Duterte reciprocates with serious reforms, it is also aware that Duterte's declaration to resume talks is probably empty talk which seeks to derail the advancement of the mass struggles and growth of the united front against his regime.

At this time, what is more important is to broadly mobilize the peasants and workers, and the entire people to expose the fascist terrorism, grave abuse of human rights and attacks by state forces against the toiling masses.

In particular, the demand to end martial law in Mindanao and Oplan Kapayapaan across the archipelago must be echoed all over the country. Based on the strength of the struggles of the different sectors of the toiling masses, the broadest anti-fascist alliance of democratic forces must be built. Expose, oppose and demand justice for the AFP's biggest crimes and abuse of human rights. Support the struggle of the Moro people to get back their Marawi.

The struggle for the welfare and rights of democratic sectors must be carried forward, including the struggle for wage increases, against contractualization, against land grabbing and various forms of feudal exploitation, and for other democratic reforms. Amplify the call for genuine land reform and national industrialization.

Above everything else, the NPA must launch tactical offensives to hit the AFP with numerous body blows and some head blows. Aim at the most notorious fascist and terrorist units which have committed grave crimes against the people. Waging armed struggle across the country is the principal method of fighting the fascist and terrorist US-Duterte regime. **AB**



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Contents

Editorial: End Mindanao martial law and Oplan Kapayapaan!	1
Balikatan troops harassed	1
200th birthday of Karl Marx	3
Labor groups unite on May One	4
Workers' fight	5
CPP applauds meeting of Koreans	5
Groups fight for press freedom	5
AFP murders child	7
K-12 grads, quo vadis?	8

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"Balikatan troops..." from page 1

Santa Teresita) covering 35 barrios and communities of the native Agta minority. A battallion of the Philippine Marines is positioned in the coastal towns of Sta. Ana, Aparri, Buguey, Gonzaga and Ballesteros. The CMO being conducted by the division is part of North Luzon Command's clearing operations in identified NPA guerilla fronts in Cagayan in preparation for the upcoming 2018 Balikatan Exercises of the US and AFP troops covering the provinces of Cagayan and Isabela. The Balikatan will commence on May 7 and will be participated in by 8,000 US and Filipino troops. Australian and Japanese troops will participate as well.

Since February, the NPA-DBC has dealt a total of 47 casualties against the 17th IB and DRC troops from the military actions it has successfully launched.

Bukidnon. A soldier of the 88th IB was killed while another was wounded when they were ambushed by a unit of the NPA-North Central Mindanao Region in Purok 9, Sitio Sto. Domingo, Barangay Lumintao, Quezon at around 10:30 in the morning last April 30. The slain soldier was identified as PFC Joehan Caballero Macalong while the wounded was identified as 2Lt. Kevin G. Abad.

Riding a motorcycle, the soldiers came from Sitio Pantaron and Sitio Bucu, in Barangay Banlag, Valencia City where the 88th IB is conducting CMO. The AFP immediately dispatched a section of its troops to conduct clearing and hot-pursuit operations against the Red fighters. Elements of the 88th IB are known for abuses against women and drinking sprees in the barrios, and their indiscriminate firing of weapons when they get intoxicated.

Davao Oriental. The NPA hit the mercenary 28th IB in a series of tactical offensives.

Last April 26, Red fighters under

the 6th Pulang Bagani Company (PBC) of the NPA-Southern Mindanao Region ambushed a platoon of the 28th IB in Purok Kinawasan, Barangay San Isidro, Lupon at around 3 in the afternoon. A Remington Carbine M4 rifle with scope was seized. The 28th IB forces were patrolling when Red fighters triggered a command-detonated explosive and engaged the troops in a firefight. One soldier was killed while several others were wounded. The ambushed mercenary soldiers were part of the insidious CMO forces deployed in Barangay San Isidro since last year.

Last April 28, an NPA unit of the NPA-Davao Oriental launched an attritive action against the 28th and 72nd IB detachments in Barangay Marayag, and almost simultaneously, another company of Red fighters mounted a mobile checkpoint for several hours at the Compostela Valley-Davao Oriental national highway in Lupon. The NPA's mobile checkpoint was only several minutes away from the nearest regular checkpoint maintained by the 28th IB.

The tactical offensives by the 6th PBC is an answer to the reign of terror of the mercenary 28th IB since the declaration of martial law in Mindanao. The 28th IB also serves as armed goons of mining companies in Davao Oriental, payed to do the dirty work of driving away peasants and Lumad from their sources of livelihood and suppressing the masses' resistance to mining operations in the area.

Zamboanga del Sur. Red fighters of the NPA-West Mindanao Region effectively defended against attacking troops of the 1st Tabak Division in Barangay Saad, Dumingag, Zamboanga del Sur after almost an hour-long firefight last April 26. According to reports gathered from the community, the enemy suffered casualties and many of them scampered away during the battle. AB

Groups commemorate Karl Marx bicentennial

THE 200th BIRTH anniversary of the greatest teacher of the proletariat, Karl Heinrich Marx, was commemorated last May 5 in the University of the Philippines-Diliman in Quezon City in solidarity with the international campaign dubbed as #Marx200 #Change the World.

After the discussion about his vibrant life under the theme "Advance the Legacy of Marxism," hundreds of activists marched towards the UP Carillon (musical bells) wherein the workers' international anthem, the Internationale, was chimed. The Carillon has not been rung for a long time.

A day before this on May 4, *Ang Bayan*, the official revolutionary newspaper of the Communist Party of the Philippines (Marxism-Leninism-Maoism) issued a special magazine that highlights the life and struggles of Marx and his influences on the workers movement and the national liberation movement with a socialist perspective. In this issue, Comrade Jose Maria Sison, founding chairman of the Communist Party of the Philippines contributed an article entitled "The Continuing Relevance and Vitality of Marxism." The magazine is part of the year-long commemoration of the CPP of the occasion. In the guerrilla zones in various parts of the country, educational discussions and celebrations were held.

Meanwhile, in the city of Trier, Germany, the house where the "great son of the city," as government officials call him, who exposed the ills of the 19th century capitalism and called for the necessity of changing the world for the proletariat, was inaugurated and opened to the public. AB

Labor groups unite on May One

Activities during the International Labor Day highlighted the unity of labor groups against the anti-labor Rodrigo Duterte regime. They condemned Duterte's continuing swindling of workers, especially his failure to end contractualization.

Protests mounted by more than 100,000 workers nationwide mark the increasing unity and resistance against Duterte's exploitative and tyrannical rule.

In Metro Manila, more than 40,000 workers converging at the Mendiola Bridge lambasted the Executive Order (EO) 51 which Duterte signed in Cebu City prohibiting the same forms of contractualization previously declared illegal. "He is just taking us for a ride," said Elmer Labog, the national president of Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU).

According to a labor coalition, the Sentro ng mga Nagkakaisa at Progresibong Manggagawa, the said EO only repeats the policy of "regulating" labor agencies instead of prohibiting them. Earlier, the groups castigated Duterte for wasting almost two years of workers' negotiating with him. They submitted five draft proposals but not one got the regime's attention.

Duterte's EO is useless because what workers need today is the banning of all forms of contractualization, said Bayan Muna Rep. Carlos Zarate. It is not surprising because Duterte's stance is same as capitalists', remarked Ferdinand Gaité, the national president of Confederation for

Unity, Advancement and Recognition (Courage).

They also slammed the futile steps taken by Duterte including the working ban it has imposed on Kuwait and the call for overseas Filipino workers in the said country to just go home. They criticized the regime for having no plan amid the continuing jobs massacre in the country. They said that the regime can't even provide alternative jobs for 36,000 workers who lost their livelihood when it ordered the closure of the Boracay island.

Alongside their call for decent and regular jobs, the workers promised to fight and frustrate Duterte's tyranny and his plan to impose fascist dictatorship across the country. The murder of unionists and labor leaders, harassment and pursuit of his political rivals, and the suppression of the people's legitimate rights must be stopped.

In Davao City, approximately 3,000 protesters marched along the major roads of the city. Among them are members of three large labor federations — KMU-Southern Mindanao Region, Partido ng Manggagawa-Nagkakaisa, SENTRO-Nagkakaisa. They were joined by farmers, the urban poor and stu-

dents from the University of the Philippines-Mindanao.

In Compostela Valley, various unions barricaded the national highway of Nabunturan after being prevented by the police and military from joining the protest rally in Davao City. According to Eliazar Diayon, chairman of Maparat Montevista Workers Union, around 600 workers from eight local unions conducted the barricade.

In Panay, the KMU spearheaded the rally of approximately 2,000 people in Iloilo City which was participated by workers, farmers, urban poor, students and the Tumanduk indigenous people.

In Southern Tagalog, workers and their supporters converged at the Crossing Calamba, Laguna. Meanwhile in Bicol, vehicles of protesters from Masbate City were stopped near the camp of 507th Police Provincial Mobile Force. The police claimed that the vehicles were overloaded and forced the protesters to pay P1,500 for each vehicle. In Naga City, only 500 individuals were able to stage a rally after delegates from four jeepneys were blocked by police troops in Tinambac town. Rallies were also held in Legazpi City, Albay; Daet, Camarines Norte; Sorsogon City and Catanduanes.

Mobilizations were also held in Baguio, Cebu, Tacloban and Cagayan de Oro.

In behalf of the International League of Peoples' Struggle (ILPS), Prof. Jose Maria Sison greeted the workers. He said that the ILPS supports "the main calls for the end of contractualization, for national minimum wage, for better social services, and for the peace negotiations in the context of the ongoing war between the reactionary state and the revolutionary forces of the people in order to achieve just and lasting peace." **AB**



Workers fight against contractualization

THIRTY-FIVE WORKERS illegally dismissed by Pearl Islands Commercial Corporation last April 30 staged a picket at the company's gate in Barangay Manresa, Quezon City on May 3.

According to the workers, they were given no notice prior to being prevented from coming to work last May 2. To justify their action, the company's management argued that the agency subcontracting the workers had shut down, and advised them to just re-apply in the new agency.

The workers expressed doubts over this alibi as they believe that they were dismissed primarily for their earlier complaint against the company's failure to remit their Social Security System contributions despite monthly salary deductions. In addition, their 13th month pay is not being fully paid, nor are they compensated for night differentials and overtime work.

Pearl Islands Commercial Corporation is a company engaged in producing packaging for various fastfood chains.

Kilusang Mayo Uno likewise dissented Rodrigo Duterte's signing of Executive Order (EO) 51 last May 1 which purportedly ends illegal contracting and subcontracting.

Duterte's signing of EO 51 is a ploy aimed at diffusing the anger of the workers. In truth, the EO simply rehashed the same provisions already stated in the Labor Code, the constitution, and in previous Department of Labor and Employment Orders it purportedly aimed to improve. The EO does not end contractualization, but instead perpetrates it. AB

CPP applauds meeting of North and South Korea

THE COMMUNIST PARTY of the Philippines (CPP) and all revolutionary forces joined the Korean people in applauding and celebrating the historic meeting at Panmunjeom between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and South Korean President Moon Jae-in last April 27.

The two Korean leaders jointly issued the "Panmunjeom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Unification of the Korean Peninsula" which states that "there will be no more war on the Korean Peninsula."

The declaration ended 65 years of armistice and hostility between the two Koreas which came as a result of US imperialist intervention in the Korean Peninsula towards the end of World War II (1945-1951).

While the declaration opens the possibility of US and China

participation, it affirms "the principle of determining the destiny of the Korean nation on their own accord." Thus, it bolsters the demand of the Korean people for the dismantling of all US military facilities in the Korean peninsula. It also amplifies the clamor for an end to US-led sanctions against North Korea.

The declaration ending war in the Korean Peninsula is a great victory for the Korean people. Their families, long divided by the war, will soon be reunited. AB

Groups fight for press freedom

On May 3, journalists in the Philippines commemorated World Press Freedom Day by condemning Rodrigo Duterte's attacks on their profession and his regime's spreading of fake news to cover up its crimes and anomalies.

A few days earlier, radio broadcaster Edmund Sestoso, 50, was shot dead while on his way home to Barangay Daro, Dumaguete City on April 30. He died the next day. Sestoso was a former president of the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines in Negros, and was known for his anti-corruption program.

According to the NUJP, Sestoso is the 9th journalist to be killed under the Duterte regime and the 186th since democracy was "restored" after the Marcos dictatorship fell in 1986. Sestoso's case is among the 85 cases of attacks and threats against journalists during Duterte's first 22 months. Aside from the nine killings, the others include 16 libel cases, 14 cases of online harassment, slay attempts and harassment (6 cases each), intimidation (5), physical assault (4), attacks on websites (4), cyber libel (3), coverage ban (3), revocation of registration papers (2), strafing (1) and verbal assault (1). Most of the victims are radio journalists, followed by those in the internet.

It is timely to commemorate

World Press Freedom Day especially in the face of increasing restrictions on press freedom. Last year, media coverage and mobility was restricted during and after the AFP bombed Marawi. Up to now, what really happened is obscured by lies and disinformation, particularly about the number of residents killed and missing due to the bombings. The regime once again imposed widespread restrictions when it required media registration to enter Boracay, after it shutdown the island purportedly for rehabilitation. Recently, it limited media coverage of the Balikatan exercises in Cagayan and Isabela, areas where the AFP are currently launching operations and has militarized.

Restrictions are imposed on press conference coverage as well. On April 28, Malacañang barred foreign journalists from its press briefings during the ASEAN meeting in Singapore. In Congress, the regime's allies in the "supermajority" have filed a bill which can ban the media from reporting the opposition's criticisms. AB

AFP troops murder child

A 15-year old student was shot dead by operating elements of the 39th IB and 2nd Scout Ranger Battalion of the Eastern Mindanao Command in Astorga, Sta. Cruz, Davao del Sur on April 21. The victim was identified as Jhun Mark Acto, a grade 8 student at the Ricardo L. Ipong National High School in Old Balatukan, Makilala, North Cotobato. He went to Astorga this vacation to help his parents collect coconuts.

To cover up their crime, the military made it appear that Acto was a "child soldier" or a minor Red fighter. His parents, relatives, and even his schoolmates vehemently belied this. According to Jay Apiag, spokesperson of Karapatan-Southern Mindanao Region, Acto's case is no different to those of Gre-cil Buya and Roque Antivo's, children who were also shot dead by the military and were subsequently accused of NPA membership.

Meanwhile on April 29, a Catholic priest was killed by still unidentified assailants. Fr. Mark Ventura was shot dead in front of his congregation immediately after celebrating mass in Barangay Pena, Peña Weste, Gattaran, Cagayan. Fr. Mark Ventura was a resident of Barangay Naruangan, Tuao, Cagayan and was appointed as parish priest of the San Isidro Labrador Mission Station in Barangay Mabuno in the same town. He was also the head of the Diocese of Tuguegarao's mission for migrants. The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) strongly condemned the murder of Fr. Ventura. According to Davao Archbishop Romulo G. Valles, chairperson of the CBCP, Fr. Ventura was known for his advocacy against mining and for helping national minorities in Cagayan. The brutal murder of the priest has enraged not only his parishioners but also other individuals and sectors of the society. Fr. Mark Ventura was the second priest killed in just four months. Last December, Fr. Marcelito Paez of Nueva Ecija, an activist priest, was killed after helping to release a peasant political prisoner.

Widespread bombing. In Mindanao, the AFP has continuously

bombed civilian communities in retaliation to the military actions of the New People's Army. On April 27, at 1:00 in the morning, elements of the 1st ID shelled Dapiwak and other populous communities in Dumingag, Zamboanga del Sur. This took place after elements of the 1st ID engaged in a firefight with a unit of the NPA-West Mindanao Region in Barangay Saad, Dumingag, at around 2:00 in the afternoon last April 26. The shelling is part of the widespread militarization conducted today by units of the 1st ID in various towns of Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga del Norte and Misamis Occidental. Simultaneously, the 1st ID dropped 38 bombs in various coastal villages at Sinacban and Jimenez in Misamis Occidental from 9:00 in the evening until 4:00 in the morning last April 26.

The AFP also retaliated the ambush launched by the NPA in Davao Oriental last April 26 with bombings. On the same day, the 28th IB indiscriminately bombed Barangay San Isidro and Likop in the neighboring city of Mati where several houses and farmlands were devastated. The communities were subsequently shelled for three hours until midnight. This forced around 50 families to leave their homes.

Moro leader, tortured in the US. Jerome Alladin Succor Aba, National Chairperson of Suara Bangsamoro (Voice of the Moro People) and Vice Chairperson of Sandugo Movement of Moro and Indigenous People for Self-Determination, was detained and tortured in the US. He was arbitrarily detained by US officials at the San Francisco Airport last April 17. He

was deported to the Philippines the following day.

Aba went to the US upon invitation to speak at assemblies organized by the United Methodist Church, the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, and the US chapter of the International Coalition on Human Rights in the Philippines. As a result, Aba failed to attend the 16th National Ecumenical Advocacy Days held in Washington DC where he was scheduled to discuss the human rights situation in the Philippines and the effects of US military aid on the Filipino people, most especially in Mindanao. The US Homeland Security considered and treated Aba as a threat to national security.

Aba was tortured for 28 hours under the custody of the officials. He was forced to strip naked in front of an industrial fan, and was handcuffed while being interrogated. He was deprived food and water and was threatened to be shot if he spends longer time in the comfort room. His personal belongings were illegally searched and information was obtained from his gadgets. His religion was mocked when he was deliberately served pork. He was accused of being a "communist terrorist." Even the slightest of his gestures angered the officials. Aside from these experiences, Aba recounted that a firearm and a grenade were intentionally placed inside his holding room. By denying him access to his lawyers and human rights organizations, his civil and political rights were violated.

According to Cristina Palabay, Karapatan secretary general, what was done to Aba is comparable to the US torture of its captives in Guantanamo and other prisons. He was treated as an "enemy combatant," a category on civilians accused by the US as terrorists, in order to justify their illegal arrests, indefinite detention and cruelty. AB

K-12 grads, quo vadis?

Last month, the first batch of senior high school (SHS) students under K-12 or around 1.2 million young Filipinos completed the country's new basic education program believing they are now employable should they decide to enter the workforce instead of pursuing tertiary education.

However, also last month, the the reactionary government belied its own claim that SHS graduates need not enter college. It said they still need to be trained and provided with sufficient skills to be employable. The reactionary government now admits most capitalists are hesitant to hire fresh senior high school SHS graduates due to their "non-readiness."

In 2016, the SHS program was implemented by the then newly-elected Duterte regime after the K-12 law was enacted in 2013. It promised the 12-year education program will elevate Philippine education to "global standards." However, it was clear from the outset that this is a policy that will enable the country to rapidly produce cheap and docile workers. It aims to prepare the young graduates to work at the age of 18 — the minimum age required by law for a person to work.

This objective, however, turns out to be an illusion. A study conducted this April revealed that only 24% of employers from the manufacturing, professional ser-

vices, retail, machinery and equipment, and business process outsourcing (BPO) industries are willing to hire fresh SHS graduates. According to the report, 35% of employers said they are not yet ready to hire applicants who are K-12 graduates, while 41% of employers said they are still evaluating it. Another survey also revealed that only one out of five companies are willing to hire SHS graduates.

Both reports stressed that most companies have not changed their hiring policies and that having a college degree remains to be a primary employment qualification. In order to further reduce the value of the labor force of these fresh graduates, employers claim that the SHS program has failed to provide them with sufficient and necessary training.

K-12 graduates who have decided to enter the workforce will now be looking for work amid the insufficient generation of jobs and an expanding pool of unemployed.

They will now be competing with more than ten million unemployed and underemployed Filipinos. Based on government data, among the unemployed are 478,000 college degree holders, 347,000 college undergraduates, and 178,000 certificate course graduates.

With the entry of fresh SHS graduates in the labor force, the vast reserve army of unemployed is expected grow further. Government data reveal that only one out of more than ten applicants will be accepted in call centers, export processing zones, and malls. This expansion of the army of unemployed creates a favorable condition for capitalist exploitation. Last year, there was a 663,243 net employment loss.

Facing this, SHS graduates will be compelled to accept lower wages and contractual labor arrangements.

Like other workers, the lack of decent employment opportunities in the country will push K-12 graduates overseas just to support themselves and their families. In previous years, the age bracket with the highest percentage of overseas deployment is 25-29.

By all indications, the prospects of K-12 and even college graduates are dim. Under the present regime that continues to adhere to former neoliberal policies, unemployment and underemployment are bound to worsen.

Certainly, more will lose their jobs until significant reforms for national industrialization that is crucial in creating stable jobs for the Filipino people are implemented.

