

EDITORIAL

Repudiate deception and oppression

Deception and oppression. Everyday, this is what Duterte and the AFP/PNP bring to the people in farms and mountains. They promise "Peace" and "Stability," but their war against the people engenders only violence and poverty. Their showcase "services" fail to conceal the deep-seated problems of poverty and joblessness caused by land grabbing and dispossession.

That thousands have "surrendered" to Duterte is pure hogwash. Were they armed, criminals or facing charges? In reality, 99% are simply peasants, farmworkers and ordinary people. They were deceived, intimidated and coerced: made to queue for rice and canned goods, made to sign blank documents, attend "dialogues" and other ploys to pass them off as "surrenderers."

The AFP's campaign to have the NPA and "Left groups" declared "persona non grata" is another humbuggery. But who do the

people really hate if not soldiers who are all smiles in front of the media, but bare their fangs when no one is looking? The real aim of the AFP is to crush the people's organizations. They are incriminated as members of the NPA even as they have no crimes nor face any charge in court.

The AFP detests the people and their organizations as they oppose military abuses. They are against the encampment of soldiers in their villages which brings danger, fear, noise, vices and disturbance.

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NPA-ICR ambushes 50th IB

THE NEW PEOPLE'S Army (NPA)-Ilocos-Cordillera (Chadli Molintas Command) ambushed a platoon of the Charlie Company 50th IB, under the command of Lt. Pulalonan, in Aguid, Sagada, Mountain Province on September 26. Based on an initial report, one soldier was killed while another was wounded. The ambush was mounted amid a focused military operation of the AFP-Northern Luzon Command which covers five towns (Bontoc, Sagada, Besao, Tadian and Bauko) and an adjacent town in Abra (Tubo).

A unit of the NPA-Mindoro (Lucio de Guzman Command) ambushed a police truck along the highway in Barangay Pasi,

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People are burdened by these schemes. These are funded by people's money plundered by corrupt AFP officials, including the E-CLIP which promises P65,000 for every "surrenderee." In many cases, those who "surrendered" have not received a single peso. Others received P5,000 but in the form of downpayment for a motorcycle. Funds amounting to hundreds of millions of pesos are plundered by Duterte's greedy officials (in the same way that they plunder the 4Ps cash-transfer funds). The more "surrenderees," the bigger the take.

Public showcases such as "housing," "Hongkong tours" and others are also a big business. Instead of being given housing, there are cases wherein those who "surrendered," especially men, are corraled like animals in military camps.

The AFP/PNP insists that the people support their war against

the NPA. In reality, they are at war with the people. The masses bear the brunt of this war as they are banned from working in their fields or from travelling, as their food purchases are blocked at checkpoints, and as their children's schools are turned into military camps. The soldiers' armed presence in villages foster fear, not joy, as they raze huts, ransack homes, fire their guns and cannons, drop bombs from helicopters, and encircle barrios with their drones.

How many peasants have been killed by the AFP/PNP's forces and agents? On last count: 231. Who can forget the Sagay Massacre, the Lake Sebu Massacre, the 14 killed in one day in Negros? They were not members of the NPA. Nor were they armed. But they are said to have "fought back."

The "surrender" and "persona non grata" campaigns are hoaxes to deceive the masses. These conceal the Duterte regime's failure to crush the NPA and the truth that





armed struggle continues to advance in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

Duterte is a big fraud in pretending to be for the peasants and land reform. He proclaims, "turn your back on the NPA and join me" while giving out meaningless documents. Duterte is obscuring the crisis gripping the countryside. Hundreds of thousands of palay farmers are being eliminated with the deluge of imported rice. His crooked scheme is to take away the land of the toiling masses as well as their capacity to fight back in order to pave the way for the entry of foreign mining companies, oil palm plantations, energy and tourism projects, roads and other big business infrastructure projects.

The aim of all these is to destroy the unity of the toiling masses in the countryside and crush their strength to fight back. They seek to dismantle and ban democratic organizations and allow only those organizations which kowtow to the AFP/PNP and officials who follow their orders. Freedoms and rights, even those enshrined in the 1987 constitution, are taken away. This is the fascist order that Duterte wants to impose on the entire country. He wants to destroy the people's capability to defend their interests and wellbeing. Duterte hates the peasants, the Lumads, the women and youth who are united and determined.

If the people have no strength to resist, nothing will stand in Duterte's way in further oppressing the people and realizing his dream to extend his power and becoming a Marcos-like dictator to control the entire drug trade, every contract with China to plunder the country's sea and land resources, monopolize corruption and live in unlimited luxury.

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The toiling masses will suffer worse hardship and oppression if we will remain silent and bow to Duterte and the AFP/PNP. Overcome fear! Come together and fight back! Unite and resist!

What must be done? We must take back our freedoms and fight for our democratic rights. We must establish, expand and strengthen our respective organizations. Whole villages, together with nearby villages and the entire towns must take action.

The Duterte regime's oppression against the toiling masses in the countryside is extremely grave. Thus, the struggle for the welfare and needs of all impoverished people must be intensified. We must collectively fight to bring down land rent, to cut interest rates on loans, lower the prices of seeds and pesticides, attain fair farmgate prices for palay, copra, bananas, abaca and other farm produce, the right to calamity funds and so on. Collectively oppose oppressive projects of foreign and local big capitalists that trample upon the interests of the poor people.

The Communist Party of the Philippines is firmly one with the

people. The Party's standpoint for the interests of the toiling masses remain. The Party pledges to further strengthen itself so it can continue to guide, and march at the helm and alongside the people in the difficult struggle against oppression and exploitation.

The Party established the NPA to serve as Filipino people's true army. Its Red fighters are composed of the best, most courageous and trustworthy children of the people. They surmount all difficulties, suffering and sacrifices and selflessly give all their strength and capability to defend the masses against exploitation and oppression. Let us continue to give all to support and cherish our army. Continue to strengthen the NPA and advance the armed struggle nationwide to smash the cruel and criminal units of the AFP and PNP and all of Duterte's armed agents.

Reject and resist Duterte and the AFP/PNP's deception and oppression! Oppose attempts to divide the masses! Unite and collectively struggle for democracy and the welfare of the entire people! End and crush the reign of Duterte's fascist regime! **AB**

"NPA-ICR...", from page 1

Socorro, Oriental Mindoro on September 24. The police unit sustained at least 12 casualties. The said elements are being used by the 203rd IBde in its combat operations in the island.

In Camarines Sur, the NPA-Caramoan (Tomas Pilapil Command) disarmed Jose Cordial, at Sitio Mantopo, Barangay Binagasbasan, Garchitorena. Two KG9 pistols and four magazines, two .45 caliber pistols, four magazines and ammunition were confiscated from him. Cordial, a pirate, was reported by residents for perpe-

trating several abuses, threats, and indiscriminate firing. He was also involved in selling illegal drugs and grabbing of peasant lands.

Meanwhile, the NPA-Albay (Santos Binamera Command) strongly denied that an encounter took place at Sitio Cadlom, Barangay Pandan, Ligao, Albay on October 1. The unit said that this fake news was only peddled by the AFP-PNP to justify the creation of the Provincial Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict. **AB**

End deception, free Alexandra!



A WRIT OF habeas corpus petition was filed at the Supreme Court by Arnulfo Pacalda, father of Alexandra Pacalda, an activist who was illegally arrested by the Armed Forces of the Philippines and presented as a Red fighter "surrenderee."

The Pacalda family's lawyers said that they demand the military to immediately present Alexandra before the court to hasten her release. Alexandra was arrested on September 14 in Barangay Magsaysay, Quezon. She was denied food and sleep for almost 30 hours. She was forced to sign an affidavit which she later discovered to be a declaration for voluntary surrender. After being visited by her family, she was able to muster the courage to deny that she surrendered. In a video statement, she said that she did not surrender and that she has no reason to surrender.

In an open letter, her father called on the public to support the call for the immediate release of his daughter. He said that he and his son quit their respective jobs to accompany Alexandra who is detained in a military camp as they fear that she might be forced to "surrender" anew in the absence of visitors. The Pacalda family remains firm as they know that Alexandra is innocent and that her detention has no legal basis. **AB**

Democracy in the New People's Army

Amid the reign of fascist tyranny, democracy flourish in the people's struggles.. It is found in mass organizations, organs of political power and people's government, the Communist Party and New People's Army. The voice, grievances and aspirations of the oppressed classes and democratic sectors, along with their anger and contempt of the the current regime, flow in these formations. The people can freely present their plight without fear or reservations. Just and appropriate resolutions are then implemented to address their problems, and they are confident that these will be fully supported and defended by the people's army.

Democracy flows in the revolution, in the New People's Army (NPA). This was the statement of Ka Ando, an NPA commander. This is ensured by branches of the Communist Party of the Philippines in NPA units. This, along with the revolutionary military discipline, is firmly upheld by Red fighters.

Discussions and studies about the principles of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and policies and decisions of the Party are key to the flow of democracy among Red commanders and fighters, and Party cadres. Collective criticism and self-criticism among Red fighters are likewise key to strengthening their unity.

Democracy in the army is upheld in three aspects—politics, military and economy.

Political democracy is manifested in the conduct of meetings and the right of Red commanders and fighters to freely express their respective opinions.

Many Red fighters are peasants and indigenous peoples. Party cadres strive in training them to express their opinions and to discuss. Short meetings and assessments are daily conducted by NPA units up to the squad level.

Military democracy includes the right of Red fighters to express their respective opinions on military matters. Meetings are also held by the NPA before and after military campaigns to discuss and assess operational plans, fighting strategies and tactics, and the victories obtained in military offensives.

Military democracy is also manifested in the appointment of NPA cadres as commanders and officials regardless of age. This breaks

the culture of promoting troopers based on seniority.

NPA commanders are completely involved in daily struggles, unlike generals of the reactionary army forces. They are at the forefront of struggles and sacrifices and serve as exemplars of the "simple living, arduous struggle" principle to Red fighters.

One dining table

Rice, vegetables, dried fish, canned goods—these are commonly shared by Red commanders and fighters on the dining table. Among the three democracies, that in the economic aspect best demonstrates equality.

They are allocated the same food ration and budget. Oftentimes, lunchboxes are lined up in the kitchen and are successively filled with food rations. Supply officers ensure sufficient food and other supplies needed by Red fighters.

Equality is manifested not only in food rationing but also in the provision of other supplies. Officials are given no special favors. All are given the same types of supplies. Supplies that are either procured or solicited are frugally distributed and those who are in most need are always prioritized. Regular inventories are



also conducted by supply officers to ensure that supplies are properly utilized.

Red commanders and fighters live simply. This is contrast to the lavish lifestyle of AFP and PNP generals who own grandiose mansions. These generals are notorious for plundering public funds, including the budget allocated for the operation of their troops. CAFGU elements, for instance, are compensated only with a few kilos of rice and pieces of canned sardines as their salaries are pocketed by regular troopers for their personal businesses.

Inside the NPA, production activities are planned and implemented based on the principle of "self-sufficiency." Comrades with sufficient knowledge in production accompany those who are relatively new.

Red commanders and fighters live together, both in times of distress and peace. They are compelled to tighten their belts in times of intense military offensives by the enemy. Democracy and discipline in NPA units is steeled in these situations.

AB

State forces kill two abaca farmers in Catanduanes

Abaca farmers Lito Aguilar, 33, and Christopher Abraham, 31, were gunned down by 83rd IB and PNP Catanduanes Provincial Mobile Force Company elements in Barangay Taopon, Panganiban, Catanduanes in the early morning of September 22. Civilians Jimmy Sierra, Joseph Torado and Jomarie Calderon were also wounded during the incident.

After committing crime, the soldiers placed rifles alongside the cadavers to make it appear that the two are members of the New People's Army. Barrio residents vehemently denied this claim. The barangay captain said that the five victims were related to each other and were only fishing on the river for Aguilar's wedding celebration.

In Agusan del Sur, operating troopers of the 29th IB and Scout Rangers gunned down Datu Carlito Anduhuyan at Sitio Dandanon, Barangay Kolambugan, Sibagat on September 14. His companion, Jhonny Boy Dandanon, survived the shooting. Soldiers also purportedly confiscated a rifle as evidence and

declared the victim a member of the NPA.

Contrarily, his relatives and barriofolks asserted that Anduhuyan is a civilian. The victim only went to the mountain to cut timber.

Illegal arrest. Seven activists were illegally arrested in an AFP-PNP checkpoint in Puerto Princesa, Palawan on October 4 at 8:30 p.m. Among those arrested was former Karapatan-Southern Tagalog spokesperson Glendyhl Malabanan. He was arrested using a warrant listing several aliases, but did not include his name.

Malabanan was arrested after their group conducted an investi-

gation on the human rights violations perpetrated by the AFP against the peasants of Taytay.

In Navotas City on September 22, police operatives illegally arrested, detained and mauled Nardric Poras, 17, a member of Kadamay-Metro Manila. This was after rushing his friend, who sustained a gunshot wound during an "anti-drug" police operation, to the hospital. Poras was accused of peddling illegal drugs.

In Northern Samar, 20th IB troopers arrested Christian Sabado, Anton Manoso and Edson Piczon on October 2 at 11 a.m. in Barangay San Francisco, Las Navas. The three are members of the Northern Samar Small Farmers' Association, and were conducting a research on the pest problem which has adversely affected farmlands in the province, particularly those in Catubig and Las Navas. AB

Teachers demand P30,000 salary

AROUND 5,000 TEACHERS, government employees and health workers marched to Mendiola last October 4 to demand the Duterte regime to uphold its promise to increase their salaries. Led by the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT), the teachers mounted a "30K" formation to symbolize their unity in their campaign to increase the entry-level salary of teachers to P30,000.

The All Government Employees Unity said that the regime should implement a significant, and not a meager, wage increase. In addition to the P30,000-salary for entry-

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The face of capitalism in China

In commemoration of the 70th founding anniversary of the People's Republic of China (PRC) last October 1, China paraded new weapons and its armed forces to flaunt its imperialist might. Like in its trade war, China is demonstrating to big capitalist countries, especially the US, that it is prepared to engage in the intensifying inter-imperialist conflict, while aspiring to expand its influence and control across the world.

In the past years, China has significantly upgraded its armed forces. According to its official statement, this is to protect the country's internal interests (including territories it has unilaterally claimed such as the South China Sea), and its expanding and increasing external interests.

This is what China has fallen to since it followed the exploitative and oppressive capitalist path. Contrary to what is being projected by its leaders, this has not been implemented peacefully nor magnanimously. In reality, China has imposed this transformation by comprehensively exploiting and suppressing millions of its citizens, and by extensively and thoroughly destroying the socialist society and economy.

The leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC) cannot conceal its treachery to the proletariat, the current dominance of monopoly capitalism in China, and its undertaking of measures which can be considered as imperialist aggression.

Its socialist rhetorics and declaration that it remains a socialist nation "with Chinese characteristics" are but a thin veil which dis-

guises China as different to other western capitalist countries. It preserved the external structure of the communist party, along with the people's congresses and councils. In reality, however, the state is dominated by monopoly capitalists within and outside the Party, and their foreign counterparts.

Dismantling collective land ownership and cultivation

One of the first and worst measures implemented by the revisionists who took over the CPC to destroy the socialist system was the dismantling of collective land ownership, administration and cultivation. In the late 1970s, the Chinese leadership began to implement "decollectivization" which passed on the responsibility of commune committees to produce and farm to individual families. Although the communes retained land ownership, individual farmers were given the right to cultivate these for 15 years, which was later extended to 30 years. Under the socialist China, the communes were organized as a form of public property wherein land is owned by the state and large communes, production is collectively decided upon and managed by communes,

and resources and wealth benefit the entire populace.

Small communes consist of 5,000 households, while

large ones can consist up to 20,000 households.

Contrary to the propaganda of the CPC that the people "eagerly" and "voluntarily" accepted decollectivization, the resistance of peasants and low-ranking Party cadres against the said policy was extensive. The resistance was strongest in the most developed towns at that time including Shanghai, Beijing and Yunnan, which later became centers of capitalist production of local and foreign monopolies. Nevertheless, by using the state machinery, decollectivization was implemented and the small and separate production of farmers was restored. On average, only 0.64 hectare is owned and tilled by each farmer.

By 2002, China changed its land use policy and implemented the reconcentration of land, but only in the hands of a few. Due to urbanization, it allowed the massive grabbing of lands owned by communes and individual farmers by private business and commercial plantations. China gave its bureaucrats in the government the authority to seize agricultural lands and transform these into industrial, commercial or tourism uses. In 2008, China allowed the unrestricted selling and the use of the rights of individual farmers to till as collateral. In 2016, 20% of agricultural lands were already concentrated in the hands of private companies and individuals, while 5% remained formally owned by the state.

This policy paved the way for the privatization and reconcentration of millions of hectares of land in the hands of local and foreign companies. Decollectivization, and later on, privatization, corroded the worker-peasant class alliance, the unity in the countryside and the urban centers, and the balanced

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development of agriculture and industry. Chinese peasants, who served as the primary force of the socialist construction, lost their political and economic power.

With the dismantling of communes, hunger became prevalent because the production of sufficient food and the maximization of resources were not ensured. Support mechanism, such as market cooperatives, were dissolved. No subsidies and incentives were provided to supplant the said mechanisms. In the following years, many farmers were compelled to stop farming due to high production costs, especially after the state stopped imposing controls on prices of fertilizer and seedlings.

With the dismantling of communes, the services these provide such as health and education simultaneously ended. During the period of socialist construction, 85% of families in the countryside benefited from health services, primarily under the barefoot doctors system. By 2010, the said statistics has been reversed (80% were without access to health services). Similarly in the 1970s, 70% of the youth in the countryside graduated from high school. This plunged to 10% by the end of the 1990s.

Data by the United Nations indicate that approximately 750 million in the countryside in China survive with only less than \$2/day (P100). Many of those who work in the cities are not officially counted as residents (approximately 250 million), and thus, are denied social services. Since the 1980s, China's wage gap in its rural and urban areas is the highest in the world.

Privatization of industry

Evicted from their lands, farmers were forced to migrate to cities to search for jobs. They squeezed themselves in the already dense city spaces, and compete for jobs with low wages and inhumane working conditions.

Approximately 150 million farmers migrated to the cities since the early 1980s due to decollectivization in the countryside. They became the pool of cheap labor exploited by local and foreign companies. In the labor force, the number of non-agricultural workers rose from 31% in the 1980s, to 50% in 2000, and 60% in 2008. This is expected to reach 70% by 2020.

In the 1990s, China implemented the massive privatization of public industries. Almost all small and medium-scale businesses, and some large public factories, were sold at extremely low prices or practically given away to private entities. Many government officials (including corrupt "Party cadres"), managers of various businesses, and capitalists with connection to the CPC benefited from this measure. They became the new capitalists of the Chinese society. They were able to drastically increase their capital through plundering public properties and businesses, and exploiting the cheap labor of the toiling masses. These capitalists plundered up to 30 trillion yuan (or P217 trillion at 1 yuan=P7) worth of state properties.

Since the 1980s, China has opened the Chinese economy to foreign plunder. It established special export processing zones where foreign capitalists were able to build their factories, without paying taxes and without having to follow labor laws, and enjoy other similar incentives. Last March, the Chinese congress passed a new foreign investment law which opened the whole economy of the country to foreign capital and plunder. The said law will take effect in January 2020.

In public factories, tens of millions of workers lost their jobs and were beset in poverty due to policies implemented by new capitalists in the name of "modernization." Using advanced capitalist countries as model, the new capitalists dismantled guarantees and benefits

gained and fought for during the socialist construction. Managers and capitalists were given the authority to hire and dismiss workers. The old collective system of raising productivity was replaced with material incentives. Socialist guarantees, including the security of tenure, pension, maternity leave, and many other educational and health benefits, were dismantled. In 1982, the right to strike, a right upheld by Chinese revolutionaries, was removed from the country's constitution. As in the countryside, workers broadly and vehemently opposed this scheme.

Because of these policies, Chinese workers now endure extremely low wages and benefits, longer working hours, hazardous workplaces and other problems. Senior workers were able to fight for their right to security of tenure and benefits in public factories, but majority of new workers are now employed as contractuels. In export processing zones, workers work up to 12 hours per day, and seven days a week. They live in crammed dormitories which charge high water and power rates. There are instances when workers are forced to work up to 15 hours day, and are called to duty in the factory by capitalists anytime of the day. **AB**

"Teachers...", from page 4

level teachers, they also demanded to implement a P16,000-national minimum wage for government employees, and P31,000 for college professors.

ACT also lambasted P61-wage increase for teachers in the proposed 2020 national budget. Currently, there are about 800,000 entry-level teachers who receive a monthly salary of P20,754. Teachers complain that on top of their heavy workload, they also shoulder continuously increasing prices of commodities and cuts in the delivery of basic services. **AB**

Further proliferation of illegal drugs

RIVALRIES AMONG DRUG syndicates in the military and police escalated when former general Aaron Aquino disclosed that police operatives themselves resell confiscated illegal drugs. Aquino, currently the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency chief, said this while requesting a P2.5 billion-budget at a senate hearing last September 16. The series of hearings expose the corruption and crimes of the PNP's highest officials, which are worst under the Duterte regime.

During the hearing, the modus of so-called "ninja cops" was brought up, wherein a part of confiscated drugs are not reported, and are recycled for reselling, personal consumption, or planted as evidence against targets for arrest.

PNP Chief Oscar Albayalde was exposed as a protector of "ninja cops" who kept more than 160 kilos of shabu from 200 kilos confiscated during a raid last 2013 in Pampanga. It was reported that Albayalde requested from Aquino, then PNP-Central Luzon chief, and Rodrigo Duterte to absolve his men.

Aside from the increase in sales of illegal drugs due to "ninja cops," the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime reported last March a drastic increase in shabu production in the Philippines in 2018. Shabu shipments

from the US likewise increased.

Aside from shabu, production and entry of other types of illegal drugs also rose. This includes the discovery of a manufacturing facility for ecstasy and an increase in the number of cocaine packs smuggled through the sea. Entry of Fentanyl, widely known as Duterte's drug, also increased. Fentanyl is legal but has narcotic effects like illegal drugs.

Exposés on crimes and corruption in the PNP and AFP is nothing new. This is the violent face of bureaucrat capitalism, wherein the ruling classes employ the reactionary state to further advance the interests of political dynasties and criminal syndicates attached to them. At the top of this bureaucracy sits Duterte, who is also the epitome of corruption and the biggest protector of syndicates. **AB**

Successful jeepney strike

JEEPNEY DRIVERS AND operators successfully conducted a national strike on September 30. Sacrificing their income for a day, they covered in several protest centers to show their opposition to "modernization" program of the government.

The reactionary government has been pushing for the implementation of the program since 2017. The government plans to phase-out 15-year old jeepneys and replace these with "modern jeeps" worth P1.6-P2 million each. About 240,000 jeepney drivers and operators, and 80,000 UV Express drivers will lose their jobs due to the program.

They also opposed oil price hikes and additional excise taxes, extortion, and other oppressive local ordinances and regulations of the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board.

The jeepney strike was led by the Pinag-isang Samahan ng mga Tsuper at Operators Nationwide (PISTON) and the Alliance of Concerned Transport Organizations, and was supported by various organizations including the Stop and Go Alliance, Gabriela, and Anakbayan. Because of the strike, the

regime was compelled to cancel classes and work in various areas, and allowed the operation of additional buses.

Metro Manila and Calabarzon, and major routes in Isabela, Pampanga, Bulacan, Albay, Iloilo, Capiz, Aklan and Davao were 90% paralyzed. Drivers in the cities of Cauayan, Santiago, Baguio, Dagupan, Bacolod, Cebu and General Santos also participated in the strike.

Drivers also opposed the implementation of oppressive local ordinances. In Valenzuela City, they opposed the "no contact" policy which allows the government to charge drivers with traffic violations and fine them using only CCTV and other digital footages. In Butuan City, tricycle drivers also conducted a strike to oppose the plan of the local government to phase-out gasoline-powered tricycles and replace these with electric tricycles. **AB**

#KampuhanIlocos

THE SOLIDARITY OF Peasants against Exploitation and the National Federation of Tobacco Farmers Association and Cooperatives conducted the #KampuhanIlocos (Ilocos campout) on September 24 in front of the Ilocos Sur capitol in Vigan. They clamored for their rights and a just farmgate price for their products.

The action coincided with the Tobacco Tripartite Consultative Conference of the National Tobacco Administration (NTA) in Quezon City on September 25. The TTCC is conducted every two years to set tobacco farmgate prices. The NTA is conniving with tobacco companies to stop significant increases in the farmgate prices of tobacco products.

Based on the farmers' research, tobacco prices should be set at P128/kilo, regardless of quality. At present, the average farmgate price of tobacco is only P80/kilo. Since 2003, the annual average of the increase in the farmgate price of the product has been pegged at only P3, while the cost of production has increased four times to P273,600.

Due to difficulties in production and severe bankruptcy, the number of tobacco farmers has dropped from 53,959 in 2013 to 40,892 in 2013. The total land area for tobacco production decreased by almost 30%.

Virginia tobacco is commonly used by companies Philip Morris Philippines Manufacturing Inc. and Fortune Tobacco in manufacturing cigarettes. These companies control 90% of the local cigarette market. In 2017, the two companies reported a combined net worth of not less P8.4 billion. **AB**

Migrants' miserable situation under Duterte

The Duterte regime is scrambling to push Filipino workers to take their chances overseas to artificially keep the deteriorating economy of the country afloat. Amid worsening unemployment and continuously declining local production, the regime is aggressively selling its large pool of unemployed Filipinos to capitalist countries that are salivating over cheap and docile labor.

Among Duterte's most recent maneuvers was his junket, together with his economic and military officials, in Russia last October 2-5. They had an audience with Pres. Vladimir Putin and Russian capitalists to directly beg, not only for financial and military aid, but also for additional job opportunities for Filipinos.

Last month, the regime also bragged about several bilateral labor pacts it signed with various foreign governments. From January to July, it purportedly deployed 4,498 overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in six client countries. Majority of whom were deployed in South Korea and Saudi Arabia. In addition, it claimed that it will be deploying tens of thousands of workers annually in Canada, Israel and Spain among others.

Reliance on remittances

The Philippine economy is in chronic crisis and cannot stand on its own two feet. To support local consumption and artificially address the continuously increasing deficit in the balance of payments (BOP), the reactionary state is dependent on overseas remittances.

Last year, the total overseas remittances peaked at \$28.9 billion or P1.5 trillion (\$1=P52.44, December 2018), which is the highest in the country's history, and is equivalent to 9.7% of the gross domestic product in the same year.

The largest remittances came from the US (\$9.99 billion), which hosts the largest number of OFWs (4 million) across the world. This was followed by Saudi Arabia

(\$2.23 billion) and United Arab Emirates (\$2.04 billions).

Duterte is itching to increase overseas remittances even more as it improves the credit rating of the country, which he uses to attract more foreign loans and investments for his Build, Build, Build program.

In 2018, a daily average of 6,298 Filipino workers went overseas (or a total of 2.3 million), which is thrice bigger than the 2,250 new local jobs created on average per day during the same period. Approximately 1.28 million among those deployed are women. Most of them work as contractuales, are exploited by their employers, and endure inhumane labor conditions, racist discrimination and other forms of abuses.

In 2013, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas estimated that approximately 10.2 million Filipinos are working overseas. This figure excludes the number of undocumented migrant workers.

Profiteering maneuvers

Various profiteering maneuvers are being implemented by the regime to squeeze billions from OFWs. Migrant applicants are charged a total of P27,450 per head by various agencies of the reactionary regime to process their papers. This includes for initial SSS and Philhealth premiums valued at P11,400 implemented by the regime in 2018 through the enactment of the bogus Universal Health Care Act.

The profit-thirsty regime also implemented the "no pay, no service policy" to force OFWs to pay the



said fees. On the other hand, the policy absolves the regime of its legal obligation to protect the rights and welfare of OFWs.

Last year, the reactionary state was able to collect P36.91 billion from approximately 1.3 million migrant workers.

Meanwhile, it only allocated P1.2 billion for its services to OFWs last year. The budget is only 3% of the amount it was able to collect from various exactions, and is not even 1% of the total overseas remittances during the same period.

Inutile

Despite squeezing trillions from migrants, the regime's services for OFWs remain very inadequate, especially for 4,000 languishing in jail overseas, including 73 on death row.

One of the starkest cases is that of Mary Jane Veloso, a human trafficking victim who was put on death row in Indonesia. In 2017, the regime seemed to have allowed the Indonesian government to carry out the death sentence when it barred Veloso from submitting her written deposition against her illegal recruiters Ma. Cristina P. Sergio and Julius Lacanilao in Nueva Ecija.

The final hearing on the case of the illegal recruiters was initially scheduled on September 26 but the local court rescheduled it on October 28 to give Veloso a last chance to testify. Despite this, the regime continues to turn a deaf ear to the plea of Veloso's relatives, friends and supporters to allow her to testify in order to save her life.