

EDITORIAL

Duterte's hollow stance against VFA

Pres. Rodrigo Duterte recently repeated his rants against the US government. Last month, he announced that he will push for the abrogation of the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA). He said that he will carry this out within a month if the US fails to reverse the cancellation of his rabid henchman, now senator, Ronald "Bato" dela Rosa's visa.

He said that he is not joking. Considering the context and his previous rants against the US, however, it can be seen that Duterte is not at all serious. His stance on the termination of VFA is hollow. He is posturing not to advance the national sovereignty of the Philippines, but his selfish political interests.

This posturing is no different from the bogus nationalism of Marcos who in the 1970s threatened to abrogate the Military Bases Agreement. The agreement, signed in 1946, gave the US the privilege to

erect military bases in more than 50,000 hectares of land in Clark, Subic and many other areas. Marcos' posturing, however, just ended up in a bargain for payment of higher land rent by the US and the provision of more military aid to support his martial law.

Following this Marcosian approach, Duterte is using the concept of national sovereignty as an embellishment to conceal his personal interests. Firstly, in connection with his stance to "align with China and Russia," Duterte is using

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5 soldiers killed in NPA armed action

FIVE SOLDIERS WERE killed in an armed action mounted by the New People's Army (NPA)-Mindoro against 4th IB forces on January 26, at Sitio Kianay, Barangay Naibuan, San Jose, Occidental Mindoro.

Ka Madaay Gasic, NPA-Mindoro spokesperson, said that the armed action is a response to intensifying focused military operations in the province. Military operations commenced on January 11 in the towns of Bulalacao, Magsaysay and San Jose.

The offensive is also a response to the Retooled Community Support Program Operations which is being used by the AFP to deceive and terrorize the people of Mindoro. **AB**

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his anti-VFA antics to push the US to provide more and new weapons, helicopters, bombs, and other matériel for the AFP's brutal war of suppression against the Filipino masses, and for the bogus "war on drugs." With this, he can win the support of pro-US AFP officials. Secondly, he is using this as a card to improve his worth and hinder some US-based groups from pressuring him along with his political rivals.

If Duterte really has even just a whiff of nationalism, he should have since junked the VFA, ordered the pull-out of American troops and dismantled their military facilities in the Philippines. Duterte turns a blind eye to what the Americans are doing in Fort Magsaysay, Clark, Subic, Villamor Air Base, Mactan Air Base, Lumbia Airport, Camp Ranao, Camp Bautista, Carlito Cunanan Naval Station, Camp Navarro and other places. These camps serve as cen-

ters for their intervention. These are where they spy, launch drones, and train Filipino soldiers for their interference in the country's internal affairs under the guise of "counter-terrorism."

For the Filipino people who are aspiring for genuine freedom from US neocolonial domination, Duterte's posturing against the VFA will only result in nothing. Time will pass and this will only be forgotten like his past declaration to end the Balikatan "war exercises" and abrogate the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA).

The actual result of his anti-VFA stance will depend on how he will play this card. It may either result in a mere "review," a new negotiation or a new agreement; or the US may also simply reward Duterte (including his request for the cancellation of Bato's visa). However, this may also backfire at him especially if the US does not immediately compromise and if his antics will go too far as this will

embolden some AFP officials, in connivance with US forces and local oppositionists, to oust him from power. What is certain is that Duterte's stance neither changes nor will change the US' dominion over the country's politics.

The Filipino people have long been clamoring for the abrogation of the VFA, and other unequal military treaties between the US and the Philippines. Among these are the Mutual Defense Treaty and the EDCA which were signed in 1951 and 2014, respectively.

All these agreements give the US military the power and right to be in the Philippines and violate its sovereignty. These agreements are an affront to the national integrity of Filipinos.

Under the VFA, in particular, American troops are allowed to freely enter and exit the country. Contrary to the reactionary Philippine constitution, their vehicles cannot even be inspected for carrying nuclear weapons into the country. American troops who commit crimes are immediately given protection by the US government and, if not for public clamor and protests, are absolved of their crimes.

These agreements, and the dominion of foreign capitalists and banks in the local economy, are the starkest manifestations of neocolonial oppression in the Philippines. Foreign control over the economy and military, and the connivance of some traitors with foreign imperialists are the primary factors why the country remains backward, and why the Filipino people are impoverished while oligarchs, landlords, and big corrupt bureaucrats get richer and richer everyday.

The Filipino people must amplify their clamor for the abrogation of the VFA and all other unequal military treaties. All freedom-loving people must hold the Duterte regime accountable for selling out Philippine sovereignty.

AB



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cppinformationbureau@gmail.com

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Various forms of plunder in FSMR

The suppression campaign mounted by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) across the Far Southern Mindanao Region (FSMR) has been continuing for more than three years now. It launches sustained military operations in the provinces of the region to facilitate the entry and defend the plunderous activities of multinational and local agribusiness and mining companies.

Under the guise of the so-called Community Support Program, the military besieges peasant communities and forests to expedite landgrabbing. It threatens and intimidates peasants, especially those who are poor, to suppress their struggles. Those who refuse to give their lands up are accused of being terrorists and are harassed.

Landgrabbing by agribusiness companies

Agribusiness companies are aggressively expanding their plantations through various forms of landgrabbing and schemes for the production of export products. Simultaneously, mining companies have flocked to the region.

Agribusiness companies imple-

ment oppressive schemes such as the leasehold and growership systems to expand their plantations. Under the leasehold system, companies lease private or public lands, often at extremely low rates, and convert these into plantations. Growership system is a production arrangement wherein companies hire private individuals to plant specific products. Capitalists shoulder all production costs, but the farmer is obligated to sell all his produce to the company at a price determined by the capitalist.

In the case of Dole Philippines

"FSMR..." continued on page 4

Honor and emulate FQS spirit—JMS

On the 50th anniversary of the First Quarter Storm (FQS), various groups organizations commemorated its contribution in the revolutionary movement. Series of activities were spearheaded by the FQS movement since January 26. Prof. Jose Maria Sison said that it is noble and urgent task to celebrate the First Quarter Storm of 1970 and to honor and emulate those who participated in this revolutionary storm by carrying out mobilizations, forums and other gatherings.

The FQS gave birth to so many youth activists and so many youth groups. It played a key role in arousing, organizing and mobilizing the youth. They advanced the national democratic revolution and did mass work among the workers, peasants, indigenous people, youth, women and professionals. and other people in order to wage all forms of struggle, especially people's war, against the fascist puppet regime. They also strengthened the ranks of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

Sison recounted that membership of Party, New People's Army and various mass organizations rapidly grew as a result of the FQS. When martial law was declared on September 21, 1972, a significant number of activists went underground and participated in the

struggle against the fascist regime.

Apart from the discussions, veteran and new activists converged in Mendiola on January 30 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the "Battle of Mendiola." The historical protest was participated in by more than 10,000 students and youth to fight the fascist US-Marcos dictatorship. In response to their rally, the Metrocom harassed the activist. This was followed by even bigger protests by the youth and workers in Malacañang.

Young and elderly activists participated in the activity. For them, the main reason why they mounted the protest is because fascism continues unabated and is even more intense under the Duterte regime. Prof. Judy Taguiwalo, an activist and FQS veteran,

said that a clear manifestation of this is the Executive Order 70 which was designed to suppress the people's rights.

A program was also mounted at the Bantayog ng mga Bayani in Quezon City on January 26. Program participants paid tribute to all students and activists from other sectors for who led the mass movement against the Marcos dictatorship. They also honored the struggle of the current generation for genuine democracy and freedom, and expressed their support for the resumption of peace negotiations between the NDFP and GRP. They also demanded the release of all political prisoners.

Relatives of martyrs and heroes of martial law Rizalina Ilagan, Emmanuel Lacaba, Antonio Zumel, Ma. Lorena Barros and Edgar Jopson are among those who participated in the activity.

The FQS started on January 26, 1970 and ended in March 1970. It played a major role in the series of mass protests which led to the ouster of the dictator Marcos. AB

"FSMR...", from page 3

Inc. (Dolefil), local subsidiary of US-based multinational Dole Food Company, the area of its operations has already expanded to 70,000 hectares just by implementing the said schemes. The company only maintains a 9,364-hectare base plantation.

Since 2014, combat operations by the Task Force Central under the 6th ID have continued unabated in Sultan Kudarat to pave the way for the expansion of plantations. During the first year of its suppression campaign, the area covered by banana plantation operations of multinationals alone have expanded by more than seven times (from 220 hectares to 1,574). In the next three years, this grew further by 70% (to 2,677 hectares). Among those that benefitted from this are Dolefil and Sumifru Philippines Corporation (local subsidiary of Japan-based multinational Sumitomo Corp.).

Nestlé Philippines also expansively put agricultural lands under concessions for the production of coffee for export. It also has a major control over coffee production in Sultan Kudarat, which is the second biggest coffee-producing province in the country. In addition, approximately 12,000 hectares of coffee plantations are controlled by the M&S Company and Silvicultural Industries Inc., companies owned by the Consunji family.

Rubber and oil palm plantations have also rapidly expanded in the past decade. The total rubber plantation area in the region grew from 31,235 hectares in 2009 to 63,500

in 2018. Approximately 91% of this or 58,000 hectares can be found in North Cotabato.

On the other hand, the total oil palm plantation area grew from 14,609 hectares in 2010 to 20,500 in 2018. Half of this or 10,105 hectares can be found in Sultan Kudarat.

Barangay Ned, in Lake Sebu, South Cotabato, is one of the places that are most adversely affected by the operations of these companies. The barangay and adjacent villages are being targeted for the expansion of multinational plantations. The reactionary provincial government has even named the area as its agribusiness zone. Barangay Ned is the largest barangay in the country in terms of area and covers 41,200 hectares. It also serves as the ancestral land of Lumad tribes T'boli, Tiruray, Ubo and Manobo.

Encroachment of mining companies

Gold, copper and iron reserves can be found in the region, specifically in the provinces of North Cotabato (Pigcawayan and Magpet), Sultan Kudarat (Kalamansig, Palimbang, Bagumbayan and Columbio), South Cotabato (Tampakan, Lake Sebu and T'boli) and Sarangani Province (Maitum, Kiamba, Maasim and Glan).

More than 30 multinational and local companies are already operating or processing their application for massive mining operations in the said areas. The operations of these company cover up to 224,103 hectares.

Ten of these companies have been granted contracts to operate

in 63,559 hectares of land in the Region. Of these, only Sagittarius Mines Inc. was given a Financial and Technical Assistance Agreement by the reactionary government for its 28,539-hectre concession in Tampakan. (*Read related article in Ang Bayan, October 7, 2019*). Meanwhile, four of these companies were granted a Mineral Production Sharing Agreement (MPSA) each for five concessions which cover a total area of 17,439 hectares. The reactionary state also allowed four companies to conduct exploration operations in 17,579 hectares of land.

Apart from these, 27 other mining operation applications are currently being processed and will cover 160,544 hectares of land. Four of these are applications for MPSA and will cover 10,323 hectares, while the other 23 are applications for exploration permits which will cover up to 150,221 hectares.

Landgrabbing by multinationals is also widespread in the region. In the Daguma mountain range in Sultan Kudarat, Korean multinational General Resources Co., Ltd. (GRCO) has shamelessly grabbed the mining area of small-scale miners. Its subsidiary GRCO Isulan Mining Corporation is currently operating in 4,500 hectares of land in Barangay Kinayaw, Bagumbayan.

Chinese companies Epochina Mining Corporation and Xin Lin International Mining Corporation have also encroached the area. The concessions of the said companies cover up to 4,549 hectares of land. Xin Lin Mining is a local subsidiary of the Shanghai Xin Lin International Trading Company Ltd., one of the biggest Chinese steel exporters.

The application of British multinational Alphaville Mineral Resources, Inc. for the exploration of gold, copper and silver in 16,133 hectares of land in Tulunan, North Cotabato and Columbio in Sultan Kudarat is also currently being processed. AB



Attacks on the livelihood of Angkas and *habal-habal* riders

Due to the absence of an efficient public mass transport system across the country, many commuters opt to avail of the services of motorcycle taxi riders in urban centers and *habal-habal* riders in the countryside. Instead of improving the rotting transport system, the Duterte regime is hell bent on attacking the livelihood of riders who only seek to earn a living and help ease the traffic woes of commuters. This only proves that the regime is anti-people and utterly contemptuous of the welfare of the majority.

Attacks on Angkas riders

Commuters are constantly faced with mobility issues because of the rotting public transport system in the country. To avoid gridlock, many in Metro Manila and Metro Cebu depend on the services of Angkas, a company that provides ride hailing services using motorcycle taxis. Many commuters avail of its services as motorcycles are more compact in size and can easily maneuver even in congested roads. This is a big deal for commuters as they are able to save up time and money.

Angkas was only established in December 2016 but its operations expanded rapidly simultaneous with the worsening of the traffic situation. Due to lack of sufficient and decent job opportunities, many were enticed to work for the company as full-time riders are able to earn up to P1,500 per day. In December 2019, the company employed up to 27,000 riders.

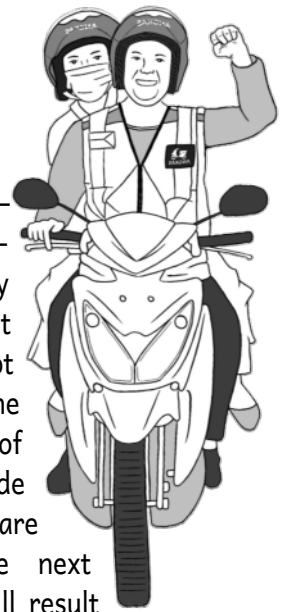
Instead of supporting the riders, the regime, through its Land Transportation Franchising and

Regulatory Board (LTFRB), ordered Angkas on December 2019 to lay-off 17,000 of its riders. The LTFRB claimed that this had to be implemented to be fair amid the entry of new players in the industry. Recently in January, two motorcycle companies, namely JoyRide and Move It were permitted to operate in Metro Manila. Under the guise of ensuring "fair competition," the LTFRB implemented a 10,000-rider cap for all motorcycle taxi companies.

The LTFRB had no mechanism to ensure that all those laid-off would be absorbed by the new companies. The mass lay-off in Angkas is not only an attack on the livelihood of the riders and their families but also to the hundreds of thousands of commuters who depend on their services.

This was not the regime's first attack on Angkas riders. In November 2017, the LTFRB canceled the permit of Angkas to operate as its services purportedly violate traffic regulations. The cancellation was only lifted in May 2019 and

riders were allowed to operate temporarily for a pilot study. The pilot program and the permits of Angkas, JoyRide and Move It are set to expire next month. This will result in the massacre of not less than 30,000 jobs in Metro Manila alone.



Attacks on *habal-habal* riders

Long before motorcycle taxis thrived, *habal-habal* services were already a popular mode of transportation especially among the toiling masses. Motorcycles-for-hire, colloquially called *habal-habal* or "skylab" are used as an alternative mode of public transport in the countryside and even in towns where transportation services are scarce. *Habal-habal* rides are practical especially in far-flung areas where roads are usually narrow, steep and rough and cannot be accessed by tricycles or four-wheeled vehicles.

There are two types of *habal-habal*. This first type is that which has a wooden plank attached to the main seat of the motorcycle. This can accommodate up to five passengers. The second type of *habal-habal* is that which has protruding "wings" or two wooden planks attached on each side of the motorcycle. This can accommodate up to 13 passengers.

Habal-habals are often used by peasant residents in transporting their farm produce to markets. These may also used in carrying baggages and even livestock.

Habal-habal riders may be considered as part of the rural proletariat. Due to insufficient income and widespread landgrabbing and

"Attacks..." continued on page 6

Traffic in the Philippines is second worst in the world

TRAFFIC CONGESTION IN Metro Manila ranked second in the world according to the Traffic Index 2019, a report issued last month by German company TomTom. The report analyzed traffic congestion in 416 major urban centers across the globe.

The report indicates that the average congestion level in Metro Manila is at 71%. It revealed that motorists lost about 257 hours last year in gridlocks. Due to traffic congestion, a 30-minute trip on average becomes 59 minutes in the morning and 68 in the evening.

Roads are most congested during rush hour (8-9 a.m.; and 6-7 p.m.). The average congestion level reaches 128% in the evening and 95% in the morning. It peaks at 143% during the evening rush on Fridays.

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FMO in Southern Tagalog

Troopers of the butcher 4th IB killed civilians Mark Ederson Valencia Delos Santos and Jay-ar Mercado in Barangay Happy Valley, Socorro, Oriental Mindoro on January 31. Mercado was a volunteer organizer of Bigkis at Lakas ng mga Katutubo sa Southern Tagalog who was abducted by the military on January 26. The butchers buried Mercado's cadaver on February 1, without the knowledge of his relatives. After the crime, the military made it appear that both were members of the New People's Army.

The crime is part of the focused-military operation or FMO of the Southern Luzon Command (Solcom) in several provinces in Southern Tagalog in January. The troopers ransacked rural communities, put up checkpoints, and violated the rights of peasants and minorities residing in areas where they were operating. These operations are directed by the newly-appointed Solcom commander Maj. Gen. Antonio Parlade. A division-sized force was deployed in Quezon and Mindoro.

In Quezon, 201st IBde and PNP-Calabarzon elements ransacked barangays Villa Espina, Pisipis and Vergania in Lopez from January 10 to 30. Simultaneously, a battalion-sized

force of the 85th IB and PNP militarized several barangays in Gumaca. The troopers put up checkpoints in Gumaca and other towns of South Quezon.

Similarly, a battalion-sized force of the 1st IB, PNP and CAFGU were deployed in the towns of Real and Sampaloc, Quezon; and Kalayaan and Luisiana in Laguna since the second week of January.

Meanwhile, interior barangays in Rizal and San Jose, Occidental Mindoro; and Bulalacao, Mansalay, Victoria and Socorro in Oriental Mindoro are militarized by elements of the 203rd IBde and PNP-Mimaropa since January 8. Reports show that two companies are currently operat-

ing in each FMO area.

Approximately 32 barrios in South Palawan are covered by the FMO of the AFP Western Command and the Provincial Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict. The 1st Police Mobile Force Company of PNP Palawan was deployed in the towns of Quezon, Rizal, Bataraza, Brooke's Point and Sofronio Española.

Human rights are violated and communities are terrorized during FMOs. In Gumaca, Quezon, a jeepney was stopped at a checkpoint and was illegally searched. An incident of indiscriminate strafing perpetrated by soldiers was also recorded in Rizal, Occidental Mindoro. Three Tadyawan youth were harassed on January 12 in Happy Valley, Socorro, Oriental Mindoro. Due to intense military operations, residents have evacuated from six sitios in three barangays in Socorro, and four sitios in three barangays in Victoria since January 13. AB

"Attacks...", from page 5

land-use conversion, many peasants are compelled to look for additional source of income. Many farmers consider *habal-habal* driving as an alternative source of income.

Despite being a popular alternative, the reactionary government strictly prohibits *habal-habal* services as it purportedly violates traffic regulations. Most *habal-habals* in provinces are not registered with the LTRFB as the application process is expensive and very stringent. Because of this, *habal-habal* riders are often apprehended and their motorcycles confiscated. They are then fined with P5,000. Often, they are also victims of extortion by soldiers and police operatives in checkpoints.

Riders are also burdened with rough roads in the countryside as these wear down *habal-habal* parts quickly. In addition, they are also

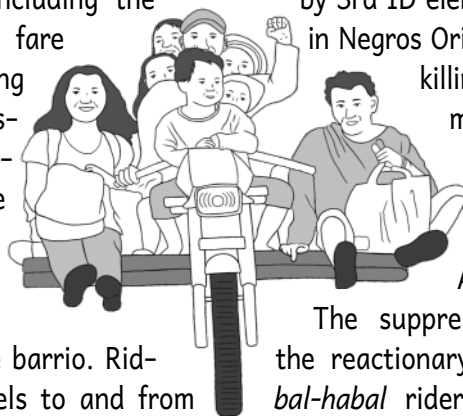
faced with increasing prices of fuel and other basic commodities. These problems further cut their already meager incomes.

Their plight compels them to unite and struggle. In the barangay level, riders organize associations to fight for their right to livelihood. These associations set local transport regulations including the standardization of fare rates and ensuring the safety of passengers among many others. These associations are also mobilized during disasters and emergencies in the barrio. Riders see their travels to and from various roads as part of their daily livelihood and obligation to provide transportation services to their fellow villagefolk.

Despite this, they still fall victim

to the armed state forces' fascist suppression. This aims to silence riders and suppress their struggle for the right to livelihood. Among the most recent cases of suppression against riders was that of Lito Itao, auditor of the Guihulngan City Habal-habal United Operators and Drivers Association, who was killed by 3rd ID elements in June 2019, in Negros Oriental. To justify the killing, the fascists made it appear that the victim was a member of the New People's Army.

The suppression campaign of the reactionary state compel *habal-habal* riders to directly contribute in advancing the people's democratic revolution. Among other tasks, some riders regularly provide logistical and intelligence support to Red fighters. AB



Nissen Electronics workers' struggle

Nissen Electronics Philippines is a Japanese company that produces automotive fuses. The company supplies these to various car manufacturing multinationals in the country including Toyota, Nissan, Ford and Isuzu. The company is a local subsidiary of the multinational company Nippon Seisen Cable, Ltd which reported a sales of 10 billion yen (P4.6 billion) in March 2018.

The operations of Nissen Electronics Philippines in Southern Tagalog started in 2009 at the Laguna Technopark Incorporated, before relocating at the Daiichi Industrial Park in Cavite, in 2016. After relocating, workers' wages were pulled down as the minimum wage in Cavite (P351.50) is lower than that in Laguna (P378.50).

Workers are further exploited as they are compelled to render overtime work, under the "six to six scheme" wherein they are to work for 12 hours a day. Holidays and days-off are unpaid, and employees are required to shoulder the costs for their uniforms and safety equipment.

In 2018, 468 of its 493 total employees are contractual. Majority of the workers are female (412) and only 56 are male. Nissen outsources its contractual employees from manpower agency Career Power Professional Mgt. Services. The said agency is owned by Edgardo Etac. Nissen makes it appear that it has no direct obligation to the employees, claiming that they are employed under Etac's agency.

Assertion of rights

Aspiring to address their plight, the workers organized Manggagawang Regular at Kontraktwal sa Nissen Electronics Phils.-Liga (Marekonep-Liga) in 2018. This served as the vanguard of their struggle for regularization which sparked in July 2018, when employees filed a petition for inspection at the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE)-Calabarzon.

The letter contained the workers' complaints regarding the violations and maltreatment committed by the Nissen management against them. Their complaints included the company's practice of contractualization; non-compliance with the legislated minimum wage; and non-payment of overtime, 13th month, holiday and night differential pay. The employees protested in front of the office of DOLE in Trece Martires City on December 11, 2018 to demand for immediate regularization.



In response, the Nissen management fired 21 workers for participating in protests since January 3, 2019.

Instead of being cowed, Nissen workers became even more courageous. They posted their placards and streamers on the walls of the factory. They shouted out their demands in front of police operatives and soldiers inside and outside the Daiichi Industrial Park.

Nissen workers continued to pressure DOLE until it released an order for regularization on February 2019. The order declared the 502 contractual employees of the company, including the 21 who were fired, must be regularized. The workers considered this as a victory of their collective action amid harassment attempts mounted by capitalists.

New mass lay off, new struggle

Labor rights violations have continued unabated despite the issuance of the toothless DOLE order, as the company appealed against it. On September 13, 2019 the company laid-off 89 of its workers, majority of whom have been working in the company for years.

In response, workers mounted a new wave of protests in front of the Daiichi Industrial Park. They also regularly conduct mobilizations and programs simultaneous with the entry and exit of workers to and from the enclave. They demand the reinstatement and regularization of their co-workers who were illegally terminated by the company.

The struggle of Nissen employees carries on. On the other hand, Nissen continues to employ various forms of attacks to suppress their struggle. It may take workers a long time to win their struggle, but one thing is certain: the end of capitalists' exploitation has begun as the workers have already been roused.

JIPCO: Peace for capitalists

LABOR GROUPS CRITICIZED the Philippine National Police (PNP) after it launched the Joint Industrial Peace and Concern Offices (JIPCO) on January 22 at the Clark Freeport Zone in Pampanga. The PNP claims that the program will purportedly protect various economic zones across Central Luzon.

The Center for Trade Union and Human Rights, however, said the program will only legalize the widespread violation of human rights in enclaves. This will only serve the aim of the reactionary state to suppress militant unions, under the guise of a counterterrorism campaign, to ensure capitalists' profits.

When it was launched, the Police Regional Office 3 blatantly said that the program primarily aims to prevent militant unions from organizing factory workers in enclaves.

The Kilusang Mayo Uno said that the JIPCO is a direct affront to the rights of laborers to unionize. Peace will never be achieved especially if state security forces such as those from the PNP implement policies that kill thousands of people.

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State forces arrest 19 farmers

In Northern Samar, 15 farmers from Barangay Osmeña, Palapag were arrested by the military. On January 22, elements of the 20th IB arrested Constandio Capate Martinico, Renaldo Longcop, Gonzalo Magayes, Jomar Orua, Delphin Meraya Jr. and JR Laoreno. The six were brought to their military camp and were interrogated. On the next day, nine farmers were arrested by 803rd IBde troopers and were brought to their camp in Catarman where they were interrogated and coerced to surrender. Their relatives were barred from visiting them.

Also, on January 23, four peasant leaders were arrested in Bukidnon after holding a dialogue with Rep. Manuel Zubiri. The victims were identified as Jun Guinanao, Kasama-Bukidnon chairperson, June Makute of Buffalo-Tamaraw-Limus (BTL), Danilo Menente and Albert Tanallion. The four went to Zubiri to demand a stop to peasant killings and filing of trumped up charges against activists, and for production subsidy. After the dialogue, they were held and arrested by 88th IB elements and were brought to their camp in Maramag. The four were accused of harboring a member of the New People's Army (NPA) at their farm in BTL, Maramag.

On February 5, Engr. Jennefer Aguhob was arrested by the military and was detained at the Oroquieta City Police Station. She was slapped with a trumped up murder charge. Aguhob is a member of Karapatan and the Union of People's Lawyers

in Mindanao. Aguhob was also threatened and harassed by the military in 2017 and 2018.

In Laguna, the cadavers of peasants Emerito Pinza and Romy Candor were exhumed on February 5. They were abducted by Regional Mobile Force Battalion 4A elements on January 19. The butchers made it appear that the two were killed in an encounter. To conceal their crime, the victims were buried under fabricated names at the Calamba Municipal Cemetery. The two were members of the Pinagkaisang Ugnayan ng mga Magsasaka sa Laguna.

In Bohol, suspected state agents gunned down Pelagio Compoc at his farm in Barangay Dago-hoy, Bilar on January 22. He was a member of Humabol-Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas and a village watchman. Earlier, he was harassed and accused that his brother is an NPA commander. AB

On the 33rd year of Mendiola Massacre: Duterte Legacy, hunger and death

PROGRESSIVE GROUPS AND RELATIVES of Mendiola Massacre victims converged in Mendiola, Manila on January 22 to commemorate the 33rd anniversary of the massacre. They said that the Duterte regime has failed to give justice to the 13 farmers killed on January 22, 1987.

The 13 farmers were among thousands who protested in Mendiola to call on former President Cory Aquino to implement genuine agrarian reform.

According to Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas, several regimes have passed but the plight of the Filipino majority remains unaddressed. They added that the "Duterte Legacy" that the regime is bragging about is nothing but a big lie. Thirty-three years have passed but farmers remain landless. There is still no justice and genuine peace.

In a statement, the Unyon ng Manggagawa sa Agrikultura said that peasant killings has intensified under the Duterte regime, which recorded a total of 244 victims. Farmers also suffer from hunger due to the Rice Liberalization Law. According to the Alyansa ng mga Magbubukid sa Gitnang Luzon-Nueva Ecija, farmers suffer from low *palay* prices and are left with almost no income due to the said law. AB

Paramilitary attacks Lumad sanctuary

FEW DAYS AFTER the Regional Peace and Order Council 11 ordered the closure of the UCCP Haran Center in Davao City, the compound was attacked by paramilitary forces on January 25. Using bolos, members of the Alamara, a paramilitary group directed by the butcher military, destroyed the walls and fences of Haran which serves as sanctuary to 500 Lumad evacuees. The said evacuees were forced to leave their ancestral lands due to intense militarization.

Around 50 paramilitary troopers attacked at Haran. According to reports, the Alamara members coerced evacuees to return to their communities in Kapalong and Talaingod, Davao del Norte.

The police arrived at Haran but refused to arrest the Alamara members. Instead, they barred the media from entering the compound.

Lumad leaders stood firm that they will stay in the sanctuary until they are ensured of safety in the communities. AB

Justice for Randy Malayao

IN COMMEMORATION OF Randy Felix Malayao's first death anniversary last January 30, activists and his relatives protested in front of Camp Melchor dela Cruz of the 5th ID in Gamu, Isabela to demand justice. Malayao was a consultant of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines.

Military and police forces violently dispersed the protesters. To distract the program, they parked a truck and an ambulance beside the protesters and honked at them.

Before the program, the group offered mass at the grave of Malayao in San Pablo, Isabela.

Malayao was killed in a bus on pitstop at Aritao, Nueva Vizcaya on January 30, 2019. AB

Aerotropolis project, a bane to fishermen and the people

Amid intensifying rivalries among capitalists, Ramon Ang believes that the New Manila International Airport will benefit him. The project, which is commonly known as the Aerotropolis, is being developed by San Miguel Holdings Corporation (SMC) in a 2,500-hectare coastal area of Barangay Taliptip, Bulakan, Bulacan. Fishermen and residents of the area, however, see the project as a mere game of big businesses, where their livelihood, habitat and environmental preservation are at stake.

Approximately 700 families will lose their homes and livelihood with entry of the massive project in the area. In addition, intensifying land speculation and plans for land-use conversion in adjacent towns may result in the eviction of thousands of families.

According to the Advocates of Science and Technology for the People (AGHAM), approximately 24 hectares of fishing reservation areas will be wiped out due to massive reclamation. Since April 2018, about 600 mangroves in Barangay Taliptip have been cleared by suspected SMC personnel to pave way for the project. Majority of those cut were *piapis*, a resilient type of mangrove that serves as a natural habitat of fishes and barrier against massive waves.

Privatization of public fishing reservations

Due to the absence of genuine agrarian reform, those who rely on fishing reservations are exploited and evicted from reservation areas. The reactionary state also provides no subsidy to fishermen especially after calamities. This is why proprietors are unable to enhance their fish production and salt farms. Among those that will be wiped out by the Aerotropolis are fishing reservations and salt farms which were acquired by the SMC after being devastated by successive calamities. This has massacred the jobs of workers in the fishing sector, salt-producers and smallscale fishermen, and has simultaneously evicted them from the idle fishing reservation.

This is being implemented along with the militarization in the area to suppresses the resistance of the residents.

The Aerotropolis project is being implemented in accordance with the design of Manila Bay Coastal Strategies, one of the major programs of the Greater Capital Region under the Duterte regime's Build, Build, Build program. Duterte has controlled the reclamation across the country to pave way for the projects of his favored big capitalists. In Manila Bay, the massive reclamation is killing the livelihood of fishermen and others who rely on its resources.

Under the public-private-partnership (PPP) scheme, San Miguel Holdings Corp. will fund the construction of the P735-billion Aerotropolis project. After the construction, its operations will be transferred to the reactionary government, and the latter will be obligated to pay for the construction expenses at a highly usurious rate. Similar to other PPP projects, the Aerotropolis guarantees that Ramon Ang will rake in billions of profits. One of the components of the project is the construction of an expressway to link the airport and the North Luzon Expressway. This will pass through and wipe out farmlands in Marilao, Bulacan. Another component of the project is the Manila Integrated Flood Control and Coastal Defense Expressway Project of the San Miguel Holdings Corporation and the San Jose Builders. The program covers the entire Manila Bay from Navotas to Bataan. AB



Anomalous DICT intelligence funds

THE ANOMALOUS USE of confidential funds in 2019 by the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) was exposed on January 31. The office spent P300 million in conducting surveillance which violates the right to freedom of expression, and possibly using the personal data of Filipinos for intelligence purposes.

This was exposed by DICT Undersecretary Eliseo Rio, Jr. upon his resignation. He explained that surveillance operations are beyond the mandate of the DICT. He also accused the department of failing to immediately release operational funds.

Progressive groups responded by filing a resolution in the Congress and Senate last February 5 to conduct an investigation on the utilization of intelligence funds.

Amid worsening fascist attacks and widespread Red-tagging against progressives and activists, the surveillance operations conducted by the office pose a huge threat to freedom of expression. The department's confidential funds has reached P800 million this year. AB