

EDITORIAL

Fight and make Duterte pay for national treachery

As time passes, Philippine freedom and rights over its seas and marine resources are diminished due to Duterte's kowtowing to China and national treachery. It is urgent that the entire people act swiftly. With every passing day, China gains wider and tighter control, exploiting the opportunity of having the obedient Duterte in power. The people must use all forms of resistance, from diplomatic to armed, to assert the Filipino's inherent rights.

Not only did Duterte do nothing to regain our seas, he even allowed China to erect seven military facilities, destroy our coral resources, siphon the marine wealth and deploy its armed sea and war vessels. He openly acquiesced to Chinese fishing in the West Philippine Sea and turned a blind eye to how Filipino fishermen are denied of catch and driven away from their traditional fishing grounds.

In the name of "friendship," Duterte crumpled and set aside the

decision of the International Arbitral Tribunal of July 2016 which dismissed China's "9-dash line" claims and recognized the Philippine's sea territory and exclusive economic zone (EEZ) in line with the United Nations Convention on the Laws of the Seas. He wasted the opportunity to win over the international community in defense of Philippine sovereignty against Chinese incursions.

In addition to the relentless violation of Philippine rights in the

West Philippine Sea, China is one of the monsters behind the all-out plunder of the country's mineral resources. China gouges tons of magnetite sand from coasts and under the sea and shiploads of nickel and mineral-rich soil to feed their steel industry. Big Chinese capitalists are among those to benefit from Duterte's Executive Order 130 that opens new mining agreements that are bound to cause massive destruction to the country's mountains, rivers and agricultural land.

In the face of China's outright transgressions, Duterte zips his otherwise filthy mouth because he does not want to destroy what he claims is "mutual respect" between the Philippines and China. He wants Filipinos to silently accept China's aggression reasoning that China

has donated Covid-19 vaccines. In truth, the Philippines is set to buy 25 million doses of Sinovac vaccines at unclear rates.

The people are fed-up with Duterte's repeated capitulationist "I can't do anything" line, and his "we are doomed in a war against China" bogey. He is fooling the people to tie the country's hands and stymie efforts to defend its rights. In truth, China may be a giant and powerful bully against small countries, but will hesitate to use armed violence against the Philippines fearing this might spark and justify the international community to come to the country's aid and deploy large ships and weapons in China's neighboring seas.

Duterte's capitulationist policy renders useless the "daily protests" and declarations of "defending sovereignty" by some of his officials. He himself is the reason why no effort was done to seek the

United Nation's support for Philippine grievances. He is also the reason why most of the forces and weapons of the AFP are aimed at his political opponents instead of used to defend the sovereign seas.

Duterte's obsequiousness to China is unacceptable to the Filipino people. It is nothing less than national treachery that he has allowed China to claim Philippine territorial seas and despoil and plunder our natural wealth. He has abandoned, in particular, the cause of Filipino fishermen. He has betrayed, in general, the national interests of the entire Philippines.

In view of Duterte's national treachery, the entire Filipino people must unite and act before China further encroaches on our seas and natural wealth. The broadest patriotic united front must be built to defend Philippine sovereignty and patrimony. Duterte's must be condemned, made to account, ousted

and punished for his betrayal. Chinese interference in politics and the upcoming elections to help perpetuate the Duterte clique must be opposed.

The Party and all revolutionary forces are ready to unite with all who aim to defend the nation's interest against China's encroachment. The Party calls on the Filipino people to use different forms of action to manifest their unity and determination to take back and defend the country's seas against China's aggression. The people's determination to defend the country's sovereignty and wealth must be displayed in the streets and other avenues of struggle.

The New People's Army must continue to intensify its tactical offensives against the state armed forces that prioritize the suppression of the patriotic and democratic forces but are useless in the face of foreign aggression. Ambushes, raids and other armed action must be mounted against AFP units that are brutal in suppressing the people, in its zealous defense of the treacherous Duterte government.

Defending the Philippine seas and resources against Chinese aggression and plunder form part of the continuing struggle of the people to resist imperialist domination and to end the Philippine neocolonial status and attain genuine national freedom. AB



<div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Vol. LII No. 9 May 7, 2021</p> <hr/> <p>Ang <i>Ang Bayan</i> is published in Pilipino, Bisaya, Iloko, Hiligaynon, Waray, English and Spanish. Ang Bayan welcomes contributions in the form of articles and news items. Readers are encouraged to send feedback and recommendations for improving our newspaper.</p> <p> @prwc_info</p> <p> fb.com/editorsofAB</p> <p> cppinformationbureau@gmail.com</p> </div>	<h2 style="text-align: center; text-decoration: underline;">Contents</h2> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td>Editorial: Fight and make Duterte pay for national treachery</td> <td style="text-align: right;">1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Workers demand aid, wage increase</td> <td style="text-align: right;">3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>9 soldiers killed in NPA offensives</td> <td style="text-align: right;">3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Protests</td> <td style="text-align: right;">3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Community pantries reflect hunger</td> <td style="text-align: right;">4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Shortchanged banana farmers</td> <td style="text-align: right;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>In short</td> <td style="text-align: right;">6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2 mass leaders arrested in Bicol</td> <td style="text-align: right;">7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Journalist killed on eve of Press Freedom Day</td> <td style="text-align: right;">7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>UCCP bishop, 5 others face charges</td> <td style="text-align: right;">7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Damage caused by destructive mining</td> <td style="text-align: right;">8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Duterte's legacy: dirty electricity</td> <td style="text-align: right;">9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Price of processed food set to increase</td> <td style="text-align: right;">10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Modi's failed pandemic response in India</td> <td style="text-align: right;">10</td> </tr> </table>	Editorial: Fight and make Duterte pay for national treachery	1	Workers demand aid, wage increase	3	9 soldiers killed in NPA offensives	3	Protests	3	Community pantries reflect hunger	4	Shortchanged banana farmers	5	In short	6	2 mass leaders arrested in Bicol	7	Journalist killed on eve of Press Freedom Day	7	UCCP bishop, 5 others face charges	7	Damage caused by destructive mining	8	Duterte's legacy: dirty electricity	9	Price of processed food set to increase	10	Modi's failed pandemic response in India	10
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Workers demand economic aid, wage increase on Labor Day

WORKERS MARKED THE 131st International Labor Day as the National Day of Action for Aid. Along with other democratic sectors, they carried calls for the distribution of a ₱10,000-aid for all who lost their jobs, the implementation of a ₱100-increase in the daily wage, and a ₱750 national minimum wage. Farm workers also raised demands for the distribution of a ₱15,000 subsidy for agricultural production. Together, they shouted: Duterte resign

State armed forces attempted to stop the protests by threatening, arresting and harassing protesters. In Zambales, 12 individuals were arrested and charged purportedly for violating health protocols. In Cebu, 34 workers and urban poor residents were arrested on their way to the protest center. All of them are members of organizations that have long been red-tagged by the reactionary state. They were released two days later after posting bail.

In Metro Manila, rallyists were forced to hold their activities at the Welcome Rotonda in Quezon City after the police barricaded Liwasang Bonifacio and Mendiola in Manila City where they were supposed to converge. State forces also held 150 individuals from Marikina

and members of Pamantik-KMU from Calamba, Laguna who were on their way to the protest center.

In Davao City, activists were able to launch the first protest in the city since Covid-19 restrictions were imposed.

In Pampanga, members of the Workers Alliance-Region 3 marched to Plaza Miranda in Angeles City. In Laguna, around 1,000 workers converged at Crossing, Calamba. Picket protests were mounted in Los Baños; Antipolo City, Rizal and Bacoor, Cavite. Protests were also held in Cebu City, Bacolod City, Naga City and Baguio City.

In Iloilo, activists set up several pantries in various parts of the province, and held picket protests to commemorate the Labor Day. **AB**



CARAVAN FOR JORY PORQUIA.

Various progressive organizations and relatives of Jory Porquia held a mass and caravan in Iloilo City on April 30 to commemorate the first year of his murder and demand justice. Porquia served as an organizer for Bayan Muna in the city. He was among those who first put up community kitchens in the city to feed poor residents who were affected by the pandemic.

JUSTICE FOR JOHN FAROCHILIN.

Members of Pamanggas and relatives of John Farochilin gathered in front of the Jaro Cathedral in Iloilo City to demand justice. Farochilin was killed by AFP elements on April 18, 2020.

CARAVAN VS. JEEPNEY PHASE-OUT.

Drivers mounted a caravan in Baguio city last April 30 to condemn the Duterte regime for continuously railroading its "modernization" program and the phaseout of traditional jeepneys. Operators and drivers demand to continue to allow the operation of old jeepney models in order to save their livelihood.

NPA offensives kill 9 soldiers

Nine soldiers were killed while nine others were wounded in tactical offensives mounted by the New People's Army (NPA) in the provinces of Abra, Camarines Sur, Sorsogon, Bohol and Bukidnon in the past weeks. In addition, 16 other soldiers were reportedly killed in NPA operations in the island of Negros last March.

The NPA-Bohol ambushed CAFGU elements under the command of the 47th IB in Barangay Aloja, Batuan last April 26. Two paramilitary elements were reportedly killed.

In Abra, a CAFGU element was killed in Barangay Poblacion, Lacub last April 24. In Sorsogon, another CAFGU element who serves as intelligence agent for the 31st IB was killed in Barangay Sta. Cruz,

Barcelona on April 23.

In Bukidnon, the NPA launched a harassment operation against the 8th IB troopers securing the construction company UBI at Purok 6, Barangay San Roque, Quezon on April 20. One soldier was killed and three were wounded.

Four elements of the 96th IB were killed and five others were wounded in a counter-attack moun-

ted by the NPA-Camarines Sur in Barangay Del Carmen in Lagonoy last April 5. After this, the NPA also blasted a military truck carrying enemy reinforcement.

IN NEGROS ORIENTAL, Red fighters ambushed operating troops of the 62nd IB in Mabanga, Barangay Bagtik, La Libertad in the morning of March 15. Fifteen soldiers were killed and nine others were wounded during the 30-minute firefight. In Negros Occidental, a soldier was killed during an NPA attack against a CAFGU detachment in Barangay Sikatuna, Isabela on March 7. **AB**

Community pantries reflect hunger and Duterte's failed pandemic response

Community pantries have sprouted in various parts of the country in the past three weeks. These aim to provide immediate and temporary aid for Filipinos who have lost their jobs or those who have not received sufficient aid from the reactionary government. This initiative was known for its tagline: "contribute based on your capacity, get according to your need."

There are now 1,067 communities in the country, initiated by ordinary people, personalities and organizations. These offer rice, vegetable, canned goods and other food products enough for one day or meal. There were long queues in more established pantries from early morning until dawn.

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) said, "these mutual help initiatives are a strong rebuke and indictment of the gross failures of the Duterte government to provide for the needs of the people amid the Covid-19 pandemic and the worsening economic conditions."

Inspiration of Maginhawa Community Pantry

The community pantry idea started with a small cart of vegetables, canned goods, rice and other food stuff put up by Ana Patricia Non, a small business woman, during the third week of April along Maginhawa St., Barangay Teachers' Village East, Quezon City. She said that the initiative was started because she is already "tired" of the government's inaction or inefficient response amid the crisis.

The initiative inspired many others to set up more community pantries across the country. Hundreds were put up by the youth, villagefolk, charitable individuals and personalities. Pantries were also put up by democratic organizations in urban areas. In some places, the

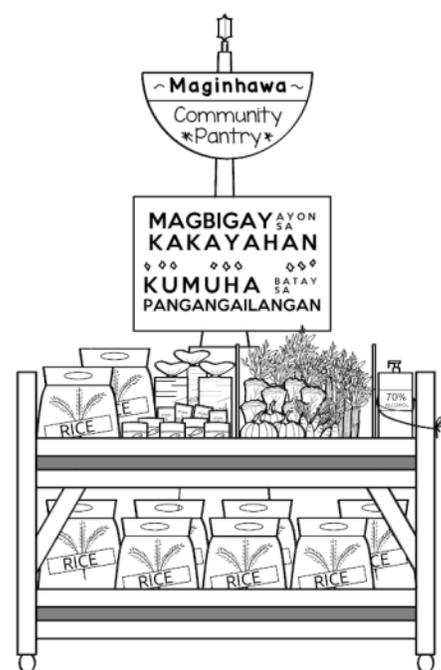
distribution of aid was conducted along with the signing of petitions demanding the distribution of a ₱10,000 subsidy and Duterte's resignation for his failed response to the economic crisis.

Community pantries were also put up by various religious institutions within their respective vicinities. The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) urged all parishes and organizations to replicate this mutual aid initiative. Organizations of artists, musicians and many other personalities also opened their community pantries.

Red-tagging and sabotage by the Duterte regime

The initiative gained more support after the spokesperson of the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) red-tagged community pantries. State forces subjected some pantries to surveillance and threatened organizers. In Cagayan de Oro, they distributed fliers to vilify the organizers of two community pantries. The agency also launched a vilification campaign against Non who was compared by Gen. Antonio Parlade to Satan in one of his statements.

Parlade and the NTF-ELCAC were met with widespread criticism because of these attacks. These have further strengthened calls to defund the task force which have reached the Senate and Congress



which have threatened to investigate the allocation of funds to the agency, as well as Parlade.

Failing to suppress the pantries through harassment, the military and police rode on its concept. A memorandum issued by the Philippine National Police (PNP)-Region 10 was leaked revealing an order to all its units to conduct activities, imitating community pantries which they dubbed "Barangayanihan." It ordered its units to "plant beneficiaries," and take pictures to "manifest community's appreciation." The PNP itself admitted that the order to "hijack" the concept of community pantries came from "higher ups," to "gain ground in fight against insurgency."

"No amount of counterfeit 'bayanihan' activities can change the bloody fascist and bloody record of the PNP. Because of their fascist abuses, crimes and suppression of the people, the people hate the police and military to the marrow of their bones," said the CPP in response to this scheme. AB

Shortchanged banana farmers

The United Pantaron Banana Workers Union (UPBWU) filed a petition at the office of the Regional Tripartite Wages and Productivity Board (RTWPB) in Sto. Tomas, Davao del Norte on April 6 to demand a ₱100-daily wage increase for all workers in the Davao Region. The said region is the main source of bananas, both for export and local consumption, in the country (35% or 846,230 metric tons or MT in the last quarter of 2020). Like all farm workers, they suffer from extremely low wages imposed by capitalists and landlords despite the high demand for banana in the global market.

The petition stated that the ₱396 minimum wage for farm workers in the region has already been devalued due to high inflation of oil prices and basic commodities. The group noted that the amount is not even half of the ₱1,057 family living daily wage needed by a family to live decently. Latest data by the regime indicate that inflation in the region increased to 2.7% from 1.9% in January, which is the highest since June 2019. The last wage adjustment of minimum wage in the region was in February 2019.

The situation of farm workers who are compensated on piecemeal basis is far worse as they are only paid based on the quantity of bananas they are able to process. In most plantations, farmers are paid a measly \$2.5-\$3 (₱120-₱144) for each box of bananas weighing 13 kilo each, or equivalent to ₱9-₱11 per kilo.

Plantations also deduct various costs from this measly income. In the banana plantations of multinational company Dole for instance, the company deducts the transportation costs (₱3.4 per box); stevedoring (₱3.8); and rent for the packaging plant, irrigation and other facilities (₱3.8). Farmers are often left with a gross income of ₱100 per box or ₱7.7 per kilo. On the other hand, the market price of banana in the countries which import from the Philippines reach up to ₱136 per kilo. In Lapanday Foods Corp., workers earn around ₱2,000 per month on average, equivalent to ₱70 per day from their monthly net

income of ₱15,000.

Bananas are the most traded fruit in world, and among the top agricultural products exported by the country. Last year, total local production dropped by 101,000 MT to 9.1 milyong MT. However, it still remains as one of the the top agricultural exports of the country.

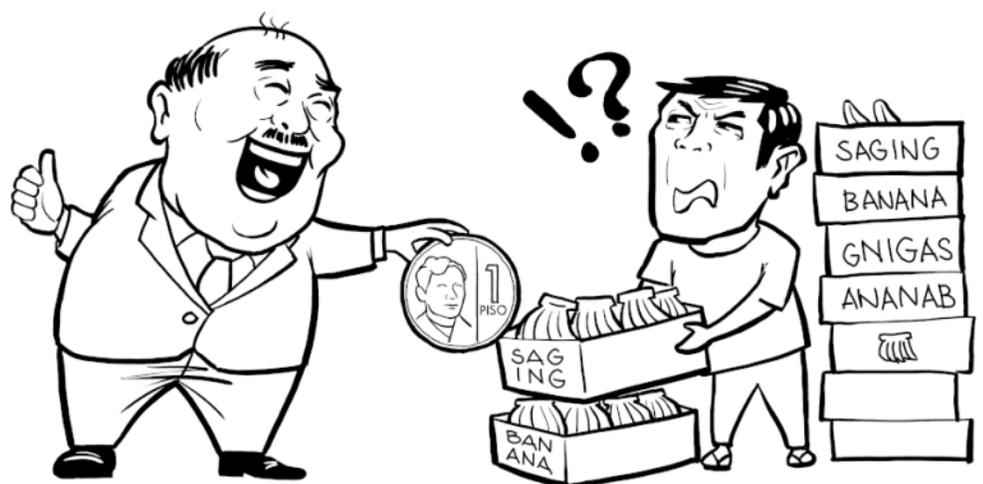
In 2020, local banana production was equivalent to 15% of the total agricultural production in the country. Around 450,000 hectares (as big as the seven largest cities in Metro Manila) are covered by banana plantations, majority of which are in Mindanao and cater to the export market. The biggest among these is the Tagum Agricultural Development Company sa Panabo, Davao City (5,308 hectares). The said company sells its products to Del Monte owned by the Campos family which also operates its own plantations. The top players in the banana industry also include the Dole Philippines (US), Sumifru Corp. (Japan), Lapanday Foods Corp. (Lorenzo) and Unifrutti Tropical

Philippines (Perinne).

The Philippines is the second largest exporter of banana in the world. Around 40% of its banana products (3.6 million MT) last year was exported, primarily to Japan. It is also important to note that under Duterte, the Philippine's export to China rose sharply by 500% from 319,291 MT in 2016 to 1.9 million MT noong 2019. Almost half or 45% of its banana imports in 2019 and 2020 came from the Philippines.

Banana exports dropped significantly during the pandemic primarily due to transport restrictions. In 2020, the value of bananas exported by the country decreased by 21% to \$1.55 billion or ₱74.5 billion.

As in the past, Duterte continues to favor capitalists while turning a deaf ear to the plight of banana farmers. During the pandemic, his regime implemented several programs to support big companies. In December 2020, the regime reportedly allocated ₱220 million to subsidize the production of big banana plantations under the Productivity Enhancement Project. This January, the regime loaned ₱645 million to Hijo Superfoods Inc., a company linked to Lapanday which manufactures banana flour. Before the pandemic, it also reportedly loaned ₱1 billion to Unifrutti to fund the expansion of its plantations. AB



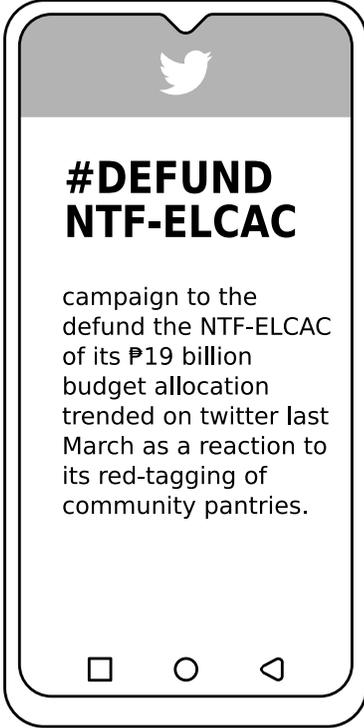
—IN—SHORT

₱4.9 billion

ecological deficit recorded by the Philippines since the lockdown was implemented.

Ecological deficit is a term used by environmental defenders to measure the value of natural resources plundered by capitalist companies in a country.

Source: Center for Environmental Concerns.



₱1.73 BILLION

net income of Petron Corporation in the first quarter of 2021.

This is the result of successive oil price hikes this year.

Derek Chauvin

police officer who pushed his knee on George Floyd's neck was found guilty of murder last April 20.

The death of Floyd sparked the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement in the US in 2020.



Only 0.22%

of the Philippine population has received 2 doses of vaccines while only 1.42% has received a single dose as of April 27.



Meanwhile, the country has recorded more than **1 MILLION** cases of Covid-19 infections.

₱97,909.09

debt per capita of every Filipino-- **₱20,818.19** higher compared to April 2021--as a result of the regime's borrowing binge.



\$4.9 billion

Pfizer profit in first quarter of the year from the sale of Covid-19 vaccines. The company estimates it will be able to sell vaccines worth \$26 billion or ₱1.24 trillion in 2021.

Police arrest 2 mass leaders in Bicol

Two mass leaders were simultaneously arrested by the police in Bicol in the early morning of May 2. The victims were identified as Dan Balucio, secretary general of Bayan-Bicol and pastor of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, who was arrested in his home in Sto. Domingo, Albay; and Sasah Sta. Rosa, spokesperson of Jovenes Anakbayan, who was arrested in Villa Obiedo, Cararayan, Naga City.

To legitimize the arrests, the police planted firearms and explosives in the houses of the victims and accused them of being members of the New People's Army (NPA). The police also raided the house of Justine Mesias, spokesperson of Youth Act Now Against Tyranny Bicol, who was not around during the operation. The search warrants used in these raid operations were issued by Judge Edgar Armes of the Legazpi City Regional Trial Court.

In Antipolo City, the 80th IB and Philippine National Police-Rizal arrested 30 Dumagats in Barangay Calawis on April 13. They were duped into going to the barangay hall to receive aid where they were arrested. They were accused of having links with the NPA.

Before this during the second week of March, 30 Dumagats from Barangay Puray, Rodriguez, Rizal were also arrested and slapped with charges of rebellion. In the same

town, state forces also arrested Benito Lucido, chairperson of the Integrated Association of Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries, along with his wife last May 6. They were brought to a police station and it is still unclear what charges will be slapped against them.

On the same day, state forces also arrested Garry Doroteo in his house in Tanay. Doroteo is a Dumagat who opposed to the Kaliwa Dam.

In General Nakar, the military arrested Loreto Miranda Bolino, councilor of Barangay Lumutan. He was made to ride a helicopter and his whereabouts are still unknown.

In Bohol, police elements arrested farmer Alfie Sarsale in Barangay Rizal, Batuan on April 30. The police raided his house and that of his parents. The police also stole ₱23,000 cash earned by the family from selling their carabao.

Killing. The 15th IB killed Federico Rivera, resident of Barangay Pinggot, Ilog, Negros Occidental on

April 24. Soldiers made it appear that the victims was killed in an encounter.

Fake surrender. The 2nd ID forced residents of Barangay San Jose, Antipolo City to surrender as supporters of the NPA on April 23.

The 15th IB and 11th IB coerced the residents of Sitio Taya-o, Barangay Narra and Sitio Malabago in Barangay Tambad, Cauayan, Negros Occidental to surrender in the same month. The forced surrender campaign is part of the focused military operation of the said units in the area.

Militarization. The 1st and 80th IB have been imposing a blockade in the communities of Dumagats and Remontados in Barangay Puray, Rodriguez Rizal and Barangay Umiray, General Nakar, Quezon for a month now.

In Negros Occidental, the 15th IB cordoned Barangay Pinggot, Ilog since April 24. Soldiers strictly control the entry and exit of resident in the said communities.

Harassment. The 62nd IB raided four houses in Himamaylan, Negros Occidental on March 22. Some of the residents were mauled and held at gunpoint while being interrogated. AB

Journalist slain on eve of World Press Freedom Day

TWO UNIDENTIFIED MEN gunned down John Heredia, former director of the National Union of Journalist of the Philippines, in Barangay Lawa-an, Roxas City, Capiz on May 2. The attack was perpetrated a day before the commemoration of the World Press Freedom Day.

Heredia was the 21st journalist killed under the Duterte regime. Altermidya, a network of alternative news outfits, also reported 68 cases of attacks against press freedom under Duterte.

The Philippines also ranked 138th out of 180 countries in the 2021 World Press Freedom Index released by the Reporters Without Borders on April 27.

Meanwhile, journalists commemorated on May 5 the first year anniversary since the Duterte regime the Duterte regime refused to renew the franchise of ABS-CBN forcing it shutdown its broadcast on TV and radio.

UCCP bishop, 5 others face charges

BISHOP HAMUEL TEQUIS of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP), along with Rev. Daniel Palicte, Ephraim Malazarte, Grace Avila, Lindy Trenilla and Jong Monzon once again faced the court after the regime revived the trumped-up charges against them.

They were accused of child abuse for providing sanctuary to Lumad children in UCCP Haran sa Davao. The court already junked these cases in the past due to lack of evidence.

Massive damage caused by destructive mining

Rodrigo Duterte issued last April 14 Executive Order 130 which ended the 9-year moratorium on new mining projects. The moratorium was put in place in 2012 by the Aquino regime on some protected areas and tasked Congress to craft a new tax regime for mining companies. At that time, there were 291 new mining applications. The order stemmed from the Philippine Mining Act of 1995.

The lifting of the moratorium and the continued operations of destructive mining in the country will deal more blows against the people. Aside from allowing mining companies to import minerals (which include soil), revenues from the new mining operations are set to be used to pay for the billions upon billions of pesos of debt the state has incurred. The lifting is also said to attract foreign capital to fund Duterte's anomalous and pro-foreign infrastructure projects under the Build, Build, Build program.

Among those set to be allowed are the extensive operations of Sagittarius Mines Inc. (SMI), KingKing Mining Corporation and Silangan Mindanao Mining Corporation—all in Mindanao and rejected by the people.

According to the regime's officials, the government is set to gain P21 billion if 100 new mines are opened. But according to the Center for Environmental Concerns, the government can only exact 8%-10% of revenues in mining contracts. In return for these revenues, mining companies will be allowed to export minerals valued up to P210 billion which otherwise should serve the local economy.

In reality, the mining sector contribute very little to the country's economy. In 2020, its share of the gross domestic product was only 0.75%. According to the Ibon Foundation, the state collected only P15.5 billion in taxes, levies and royalties from the industry, equiva-

lent to 0.07% of all tax collections.

The industry also employ only 1% of the labor force. According to government data, mining employed around 190,000 in 2019. The new order is said to create 42,000 new jobs but this is only a small fraction of the number of unemployed and workers who continue to find themselves out of work due to the over-long longdown.

On the other hand, local and foreign mining firms are swimming in profits even during the height of the pandemic. One of these in Nickel Asia, which owns Taganito Mining Corporation, Rio Tuba Nickel Mining Corporation, at Cagdianao Mining Corp/ East Coast Mineral Resources Corporation. Nickel Asia's net profit ballooned to P4.07 billion in 2020, 53% higher compared to its P2.63 billion net profit in 2019. Philex Mining Corporation also registered

a net profit of P1.16 billion, 645% higher from 2019. These companies' operations are some of the most destructive in the country.

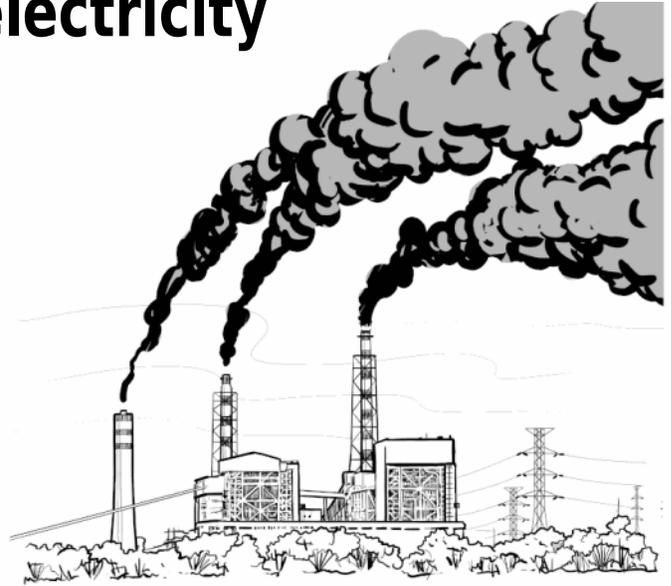
The EO 130 was met with left and right protests from environmental groups, the Catholic church and other democratic sectors. This will only bring added death and destruction to the country, they said. Among those who protested is the Marbel diocese which have been fighting to keep SMI operations closed in Tampakan, South Cotabato. Groups such as Caraga Watch, Bayan Muna, Kalikasan Network, Panalipdan Mindanao and many more who have fought destructive mining for decades likewise protested.

According to the Kakikasan Network, opening new mines will result in more destruction to the environment. There have been numerous cases of mines destroying water and food supply, as well as forests and its biodiversity. Among its effect is the more frequent and deadlier flooding which has destroyed lives and billions worth of livelihood. AB



Duterte's legacy: Dirty electricity

The Earth Day, an annual event to demonstrate support for environmental protection, was commemorated internationally last April 22. In the Philippines, the Duterte regime announced its submission of its Nationally Determined Contribution to make it appear that it is doing something to fight global warming. The document contains the commitment of the Philippines to gradually decrease its green house gas emissions such as carbon dioxide, methane, and others to 75% until 2030 and 100% in 2040. This is in accordance to the Paris Agreement on Climate change which was ratified by the Philippines and signed by 196 countries in 2016.



This commitment, however, is contradictory to the regime's actual plans in the energy industry. In fact, the regime even plans to further strengthen the ever-growing production of coal in the country. In the whole world, the burning of coal is considered one of the biggest sources of greenhouse gases which accumulate in the atmosphere and trap heat. Based on its Coal Roadmap 2017-2040, the regime plans to increase coal production to 282 million metric tons (MT) in 2023-2040 from 23 million MT in 2017-2018. Five large electric companies also plan to expand their capacity to generate electricity to 21,836 megawatts (MW) of electricity in the next two to six years from the current 14,579 MW.

These power plants are funded by at least 15 big banks in the country. According to the coalition Withdraw From Coal, the biggest funders of these plants include the Bank of the Philippine Islands of the Ayala family and Banco de Oro of the Sy family.

In 2020, the investment of these banks in coal power plants and production reached up to \$13.42 billion. Last March, members of the Youth Advocates for Climate

Action Philippines and Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment protested in front of the headquarters of the Standard Chartered Bank in Makati City to demand the withdrawal of its loans worth \$674 million to six coal-fired power plants in various parts of the country.

Several churches in Quezon and Negros Occidental launched a symbolic action last month, including 15 parishes in Lucena, to oppose the expansion of operations of these coal-fired power plants. Three large coal-fired power plants are currently operating in Quezon. Three other concessions are still pending for approval including the coal-fired power plant of the Atimonan One Energy ng Manila Electric Company (Meralco).

In sum, there are 23 operational coal-fired power plants in the Philippines. These power plants generate up to 49% of the country's electricity. Seventy-five percent of the coal used by these plants are imported from other countries, primarily from Indonesia and Australia. Majority of the coal mined in the Philippines are exported to China.

The regime projects that the

consumption of electricity generated by coal-fired power plants will further increase to 59% in 2029. In fact, while Duterte is making it appear the he plans to do away with coal, he himself inaugurated last 2019 the San Buenaventura Power Ltd. Co., a coal-fired power plant owned by Meralco in Quezon, and called on investors to construct similar power plants. The said power plant was funded using a World Bank loan.

Coal is considered the "dirtiest" of fossil fuels, contrary to Duterte's claim that it is "clean." The carbon monoxide which is produced when burning coal is double the amount of what is generated when processing natural gas, and 30% higher than when gasoline is burned.

In the global market, coal is also considered the most expensive source of energy after the price of oil dropped in 2020. It was most expensive in March 2020 when the price of coal surged to \$66.85 per MT, which is equivalent to \$27.36 per barrel of oil. Since the country is dependent on coal imports, the high and increasing cost of electricity in the Philippines is often attributed by companies to the high cost of the product in the global market. **AB**

Prices of processed food products are set to increase

There is no hope in sight in the next months for a reduction in the prices of processed foods such as canned goods, hotdogs and other products dependent on imported ingredients, as well as other products as bread and milk that depend on imported input.. This is due to the continuous increase in the prices of basic food products in the global market.

Based on the Bloomberg Agriculture Spot Index last April, prices of wheat, corn and soybeans have already soared to the highest levels in the global market since 2013. This is due to the low production in countries which export the said products and the importation of China of bigger volumes of these products for its industries.

Wheat is used in producing bread and other related products, while corn and soybeans are used as feeds. Soybeans is also used in producing soy sauce, tofu and other products.

The Philippines is affected by the increases as it fully imports its wheat supplies and 99% of its soy bean supplies. The impact of the increase in the price of feeds is felt in the country in the form of expensive pork

and chicken meat in local markets.

On April 8, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations projected that the prices of oil, meat and milk will further increase.

In the past ten years, the import dependency ratio on food has been increasing. From 18% in 2010, it soared to 29% in 2019. This means that more than one-fourth of the total food supply in the country is dependent on the the supply or shortage of food products in the global market. The volume of imported commodities which increase annually include that of rice (23% of the local supply in 2019), pork, beef and chicken. Food and beverages manufacturers almost fully import their raw materials from other countries. AB

Myanmar fighters shoot down junta helicopter

THE KACHIN INDEPENDENCE Army (KIA) shot down a helicopter of the junta in its offensive in Momauk, Kachin state in Myanmar (formerly Burma) last May 3. The KIA is one of the armed groups of national minorities which oppose the military junta. Helicopters and fighter jets have been used by the junta in the past few weeks to bomb the said area. The spokesperson of the KIA reported that three civilians were killed and nine others were wounded during the bombings, and around five thousand individuals were forced to evacuate.

On April 27, the Karen National Liberation Army attacked and burned a military camp in the boundary of Thailand and Myanmar. The raid was conducted after soldiers strafed civilians aboard boats who were crossing the river. In retaliation, the junta deployed fighter jets to bomb the areas.

Modi's failed Covid-19 response in India

There is currently a strong call in India for the resignation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi due to his failed response to the Covid-19 pandemic which has resulted in an unprecedented spread of the virus in the country in the past month. Last May 6, the country recorded a total of 21 million cases of infections and 230,151 deaths related to Covid-19. At least 412,618 of these cases were recorded on May 5 alone.

India is now considered the epicenter of the Covid-19 pandemic after surpassing the number of infections in the US. According to the World Health Organization, approximately 28% of the new cases of Covid-19 in the whole world is in India.

The surge in cases is primarily attributed to "super-spreader event"

or big political and religious gatherings which were allowed by the Modi regime in the past few months. This includes electoral rallies and religious gatherings which were participated in by millions of individuals and wherein health protocols were not strictly enforced.

Shortages in health facilities and

medical equipment in India have also worsened, especially that of oxygen tanks. Many die in queues outside hospitals without receiving treatment.

There is also widespread concern across the world over the emergence of a new variant of Covid-19 called B.1.617.2 which was first detected in India and is referred to as a "double mutant." It is believed that this is more contagious. Studies are still being conducted to determine whether available vaccines are effective against this. AB