



## EDITORIAL

# Fight for genuine freedom! End Duterte's reign!

**T**he people must ardently fight and end the reign of the national traitor Duterte. The future of the entire nation and the life of every Filipino are at stake under his unrelenting subservience to imperialist powers.

Duterte seems to have offered the seas and natural resources of the country at the altar of China in exchange for fat contracts which he and his fellow bureaucrat capitalists profit from. On the other hand, he further strengthened US control of the Philippines as a large military base in exchange for its continuous military aid for his brutal and terroristic "counter-insurgency" and "anti-drug" wars.

As he benefits from these, Duterte is deaf to the clamor of the people to fight for genuine freedom and defend the interest of the country in the face of two rivaling imperialist superpowers. If Duterte remains in power, foreign domination, the chronic crisis, and the fascist suppression of the national democratic movement in the Philippines will certainly intensify.

The situation in the Philippines is firmly interconnected with the current global situation which is beset by intensifying contradictions among imperialist powers in the fields of economy and trade, diplomacy, politics and military. While the crisis of the global capital-

ist system remains unresolved, these contradictions and its impact on the Philippines and other semi-colonies and will intensify.

Leading imperialist powers, especially the US which remains as the most powerful due to its vast military machinery dispersed across the globe, are at the center of these contradictions. Various imperialist powers are rigorously challenging the dominance of US, especially Russia in the military field, and China in the economic field.

In its desperation to arrest its internal economic crisis, the US is bustling to revive its hegemony.

The US resists the emerging division of the world (in the fields of military and trade) among imperialists under which its spheres of control are being reduced.

Historically, the Philippines has always been important in the geopolitical strategies of imperialist countries. It is sought after by global powers as it is located along major trade routes, especially that going to and from the Indian Ocean, and East and Southeast Asia.

In the past more than a century, the US imposed its control over the Philippines, firstly through direct colonization, and later on, through indirect control. US military bases in the Philippines are used as spring-

board for deploying military troops in wars of aggression from Vietnam to the Middle East, and also for expanding its market for American products in Asia, especially in China. Almost three decades have passed since these bases were dismantled, but up to the present, hundreds of American troops are permanently stationed in the Philippines and their exclusive facilities in AFP camps continue to multiply.

The subsumption of the Philippines to the colonial and semicolonial domination of the US is the biggest hindrance to the development and advancement of the country. The economy of the Philippines is dominated by American corporations and is directed by the USAID, IMF-WB, and US banks and finance institutions.

China emerged as a capitalist superpower since the beginning of 2000s. It used its hundreds of millions of cheap laborers to absorb productive capital, especially those from the US. Later on, the world market was flooded with cheap

products from China. At present, China is threatened by a production slow down due as it has saturated the market with overproduced commodities and capital. In an attempt to mitigate the crisis it is beset in, China is expediting its exportation of capital in the form of loans and extensive infrastructure construction.

As part of these desperate schemes, China has increased its presence in the Philippines over the past years, particularly through exploiting the mineral and other natural resources of the country. China is competing with the US and other capitalist powers in depleting the resources of the Philippines. Simultaneously, it is pouring in infrastructure projects loans used to purchase its overproduced cement and steel.

China acknowledges that the Philippines is a US military stronghold which the latter uses as its seaport and airport, and a launch pad of its war vessels and materiel. For a long period, the US used the Philippines to dominate and control

trade activities in the South China Sea. China saw the need to strengthen its presence and influence in the Philippines amid its intensifying rivalry with the US. This is why it is aggressively asserting its control and claim over vast maritime territories at the western side of the Philippines, exploiting aquatic resources and constructing their military facilities in the said area.

The Philippines is caught between two clashing imperialist giants. The Filipino people should carry their struggle forward for genuine freedom from US control and the intrusion of China.

This struggle is currently focused on fighting against the national traitor Duterte. He must be opposed and held accountable for his contempt of the freedom and sovereignty of the Philippines.

First, his surrender of the rights of the Philippines in the South China Sea, including the sovereign right to the country's "exclusive economic zone" must be denounced. He must also be held accountable for corruption and enriching himself through anomalous agreements and loan contracts.

Simultaneously, Duterte's subservience to US imperialism must be exposed as the foremost imperialist power in the Philippines, especially that it is attempting to use big mass protests against China to conceal or justify the intensification of its intervention and use of the Philippines for its military interests.

Duterte must be opposed and held accountable for paving the way for the increased presence of US military forces in the country through the Operation Pacific Eagle-Philippines, and the increasing number of joint exercises and maneuvers of the US military in the Philippines. We must fight the imposition of the US to change the 1987 constitution to completely liberalize the economy of the country to the benefit of foreign big capitalists, whether American or Chinese. This is being carried

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# Legislative agenda for all-out liberalization

In his upcoming State of the Nation Address this July 22, Rodrigo Duterte is expected to once again demonstrate utter subservience to his US imperialist master by prioritizing the implementation of neoliberal economic reforms which have long been recommended by the US under its The Arangkada Philippines Project (TAPP).

These reforms aim to push for all-out liberalization of the local economy by streamlining or dismantling investment restrictions for multinationals and their subsidiaries. In the past three years, Duterte and various government agencies successively issued executive and administrative orders, respectively, to gradually foist the implementation of this neoliberal scheme.

## PSA amendments

Among those targeted for investments by multinationals is the telecommunications and transportation subsector. The said industries are still considered public utilities. Public utilities are defined by reactionary law as "goods or services which satisfy the needs of a community." As these are considered strategic enterprises, the 1987 Constitution limits foreign equity on public utilities to 40%. This provision, however, is brazenly violated as many telecommunication and transportation companies are already controlled by foreign capitalists. This is implemented through loans and partnerships with local compradors.

To completely dismantle remaining protections on the subsector, the regime is pushing for the amendment of the Public Service Act (PSA). In compliance with TAPP recommendations, telecommunications and transportation will be removed from the list of public utilities. Its scope will now be limited only to "distribution and transmission of electricity; and water pipeline distribution and

sewerage pipeline system. This will allow the full ownership and control over the operation of companies in these industries by foreign capitalists. Duterte's supermajority failed to railroad the enactment of this proposal before the 17th Congress finally closed last month.

## FIA amendments

The US is also pushing for the amendment of the Foreign Investment Act (FIA) to compel the government to more frequently review and shorten the list of restrictions on investment areas and professions that are exclusively for Filipinos. The list, which is called the foreign investment negative list (FINL), prohibits the entry of and full ownership by transnationals in specific enterprises, and the practice of professions to foreign nationals.

It particularly seeks to allow foreign professionals, especially those from imperialist countries, to work in the Philippines and manage the operations of multinationals and their subsidiaries. This poses a threat to the employment of Filipino lawyers, doctors, scientists, engineers and other professionals as they will be compelled to comply with foreign requisites in the guise of promoting "global standards."

On October 2018, Duterte issued

Executive Order 65 which promulgated a shortened FINL. It removed the restriction on five investment areas and activities including internet businesses; teaching non-professional subjects in college; technical vocational training centers that are not part of the formal education system; financing companies; and wellness centers. It also increased the rate of foreign equity allowed on contracts for construction and repair of public-works and development projects from 25% to 40%; and on private radio networks from 20% to 40%.

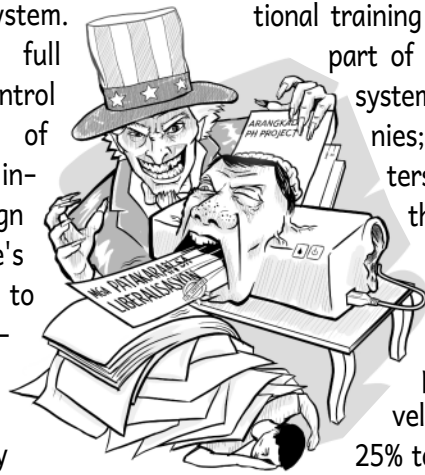
These aggressive liberalization measures will immediately benefit China through capital investments and its deployment of personnel as per its loan conditions to the regime.

## Other measures

The US also recommended the amendment of the Retail Trade Liberalization Act. This aims to further lower the capitalization requirement of foreign retail companies from \$2.5 million to \$200,000.

Duterte is also railroading the passage of the the second TRAIN Law package dubbed as the Trabaho Bill. This aims to lower the corporate income tax rate from 30% to 20% and rationalize the incentives given to corporations operating in special economic zones.

In sum, since he assumed the presidency, Duterte had issued no less than 10 executive orders to pave way for the full liberalization of the local economy. AB



"Fight...", from page 2

forward by Duterte to push for the implementation of his bogus federalism or other changes to ensure the expansion of the power of his family.

We must condemn the US and China for supporting the tyrannical rule of Duterte, and hold them account-

able, especially the US, for arming its fascist agents. The military support received by Duterte's military from the US reinforces him to carry on with the relentless mass killings, political persecution and suppression against those fighting his reign. AB

# US tightens hold on the Philippines

THE PHILIPPINES further tightened its hold on the Philippines after the 8th Bilateral Strategic Dialogue (BSD) between both countries was concluded last June 15-16. The annual BSD is conducted under US-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty and is participated in by ranking officials of the US government and the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

The US delegation was headed by Ambassador Sung Kim, along with representatives of the State Department for East Asian and Pacific Affairs and Department of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs. Not only military, but also political and economic matters were discussed during the dialogue.

The US used the dialogue to further assert its power over Asia, especially amid its tension with China. It urged the Philippines to uphold the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) code of conduct to counter the claim of China over the disputed territory in the South China Sea. It was also agreed upon that the Philippines will participate in US freedom of navigation operations, through to project the latter's

strength through sailing warships and flying jetfighters within the territory of the country.

Bigger exercises will be conducted by the Philippine Army and US in the coming years. In the Salaknib 2020, the 1st Brigade Combat Team (BCT), founded by the US military in 2018 will be retrained. About 1,500 BCT soldiers and 1,700 US Army Pacific Command troopers will participate in the activity. Salaknib purportedly aims to enhance interoperability of US military commanders and AFP soldiers in conventional warfare and counterterrorism operations. "This is a preparation for large-scale conflicts," said Philippine Army spokesperson Lt. Col. Ramon Zagala.

Prior to the BSD, the US already allocated a \$145.6 million aid for the



AFP this 2019. This still excludes the share of the Philippine government from \$1.5 billion military aid, recently approved by US President Donald Trump for countries in the Asia-Pacific, for 2019-2023.

In conjunction with the BSD, the Marine Aviation Support Activity (MASA) was also held at the Marine Base Gregorio Lim in Ternate, Cavite. MASA is conducted twice a year and is participated in by the Marines and Air Force of the US and Philippines. MASA is one of the 280 military exercises which are scheduled to be conducted in the country this 2019. AB

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## Workers mount #PayDayProtest

MEMBERS OF THE Kilusang Mayo Uno conducted a #PayDayProtest on July 15, a week before Rodrigo Duterte's State of the Nation Address. They condemned the regime's continuing policy of wage repression, contractualization and the overarching jobs crisis in the country.

Farm workers from Hacienda Buenconsejo in E.B. Magalona, Negros Occidental participated in the campaign. They said that their pockets are already empty because of the hacienda's illegal closure and its management's termination of workers. Their Their ₱150-daily wage is way below the legislated ₱365-daily minimum wage for workers in Negros. Majority of them have worked in the hacienda for three up to 24 years.

In Cebu, drivers protested to condemn the bogus jeepney modernization program which is essentially a scheme to kill their livelihood.

In Davao City, police elements illegally searched through the personal belongings of activists protesting in front of the regional office of the Department of Labor and Employment.

Earlier, workers spearheaded by the Pepsi Cola Workers Unity protested in front of the factory gates in Muntinlupa City last July 12. They condemned the management for turning a deaf ear to the demands, including wage increase and the regularization of 1,000 contractuels, which they raised during negotiations for their collective bargaining agreement. AB

## NPA harasses 63rd & 87th IB

THE NEW PEOPLE'S Army (NPA)-Western Samar twice harassed elements of the 63rd IB on June 16 in Barangay Bay-ang, San Jorge, Samar. Two soldiers were killed-in-action. Three elements of the 87th IB were also killed in a harassment operation in Barangay Sto. Niño, Paranas on June 27.

Meanwhile, the NPA meted a punitive action against Sonny Moreno, a member of the Military Intelligence Battalion (MIB), in Poblacion, San Jose de Buan last July 7. He actively participated in surrender campaigns against civilians. Moreno was also a notorious rabid counter-revolutionary mercenary of former mayor Ananias Rebato. The NPA punished Rebato on October 2018. AB

# Regime coerces fishermen to withdraw writ of kalikasan petition

ON JULY 9, lawyers of the Duterte regime coerced 40 fishermen from Masinloc, Zambales and Palawan to withdraw their petition for a writ of kalikasan in the West Philippine Sea (WPS).

Assisted by the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, the fishermen filed a petition at the Supreme Court last April against China's destruction of coral reefs at the WPS. A writ of kalikasan is a legal remedy used to compel the incumbent government to protect the constitutional right of Filipinos to a healthy environment in compliance with the 1987 Constitution.

The fishermen filed the petition to stop the China's reclamation to erect its military structures within Philippine territory. The reclamation has resulted in massive destruction of reefs, especially in Zambales and Palawan.

The Supreme Court earlier issued a decision in favor of the fishermen last May. It ordered the Duterte regime to protect the WPS and take measures to stop the violation of environmental laws, especially in the exclusive economic maritime zones of the Philippines. Chel Diokno, the fishermen's lawyer, stated that the decision proved that their petition is legitimate. He added that their withdrawal are a result of government intimidation. Because of this, the court cancelled the second hearing wherein the fishermen and government representatives were supposed to meet.

By coercing them to withdraw,

the regime was able to remove a legal obstacle to Chinese exploitation in the Philippine seas.

Meanwhile on July 12, in commemoration of the third year since Arbitral Tribunal's issuance of the decision in favor of the Philippines' claim over the disputed West Philippine Sea, hundreds trooped to the Chinese Embassy to condemn the continuing intrusion of China in Philippine maritime territories.

According to P1NAS, the decision of the Arbitral Tribunal in 2016 may also be help other countries to fight Chinese intrusion in their respective maritime territories. As a result of the reclamation, China was able to complete the construction of a military base in the Philippine seas. AB

## SOS condemns suspension order against Lumad schools

STUDENTS AND TEACHERS of Lumad schools under the Save Our Schools (SOS) Network protested in front of the headquarters of the Department of Education in Pasig City on July 17 to condemn its attempt to order the closure of Lumad schools in Mindanao. In particular, they criticized its suspension of 55 schools of the Salugpongan Ta' Tanu Igkanogon Community Learning Center Inc. in compliance with the order of National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon, Jr.

The Save Our Schools (SOS) recorded that 215 schools in Mindanao have been forcibly closed since 2016. Eighty schools closed down due to military occupation in communities and systematic attacks and destruction of facilities by soldiers.

Duterte has long accused Salugpongan and other Lumad schools of being schools operated by the New People's Army. In his second State of the Nation Address in 2017, he even threatened to bomb the said schools. This year, 30 Lumad schools were closed wherein 1,300 students were compelled to stop schooling due to relentless military attacks.

The CPP stated that the DepEd order manifests how the military controls the policy issuances of civilian agencies. It added that this adds to the anti-Lumad policies of the Duterte regime including the grabbing of ancestral lands for conversion into mining and plantation uses. AB

## The scourge of liberalization to rice farmers

ECONOMIC OFFICIALS of the reactionary government, during their Pre-State of the Nation Address Economic and Infrastructure Forum, dubbed the Republic Act 11203 or Rice Liberalization Act a "monumental legislative achievement." This is a big fat lie as this "achievement" is considered a scourge by rice farmers.

The said law was implemented in December 2018 to arrest rice inflation in the lokal market. In reality, however, the price of rice only dropped by ₱1-2 since the implementation of the law. Its retail price is still pegged at ₱30-₱70.

This is despite the deluge of imported rice whose landed cost range from ₱18-₱25/kilo.

On the other hand, the average farmgate price of local palay dropped from ₱20/kilo in the beginning of 2019 to ₱12-₱17/kilo this June. This value is almost equivalent to the cost of production shouldered by rice farmers. Because of this, rice farmers are expected to lose up to ₱114 billion this year which is way beyond the much-hyped ₱5.9 billion rice tariff which was collected after the implementation of the liberalization law. AB

# Rift in the Duterte alliance widens

The rift in the Duterte-Arroyo-Marcos alliance is widening further. This is evident in the continuing rivalry among its henchmen who are vying for the highest position in Congress. Duterte directly intervened in the competition by endorsing last July 8 Alan Peter Cayetano and Lord Allan Velasco to alternately share the Speakership. But days after this, however, the congressmen still failed to reach a consensus contrary to Duterte's expectations.

Until the eve of the opening of Congress, nobody among the rivaling congressmen is certain to garner a majority vote.

When Duterte endorsed the speakership of Cayetano and Velasco, he also endorsed Martin Romualdez from the Arroyo bloc to act as the majority leader. Cayetano gained the blessing of Duterte because he promised to lobby for charter change or cha-cha in Congress. Many, however, still oppose the plan for his speakership. The PDP-Laban, earlier, refused the term-sharing offer. Three other blocs in Congress, including that of siblings Sara and Paolo Duterte's, are also not amenable to the scheme.

## New wrapping, old scheme

Duterte's endorsement of Cayetano was primarily based on the latter's promise to champion cha-cha. Despite having a supermajority in the previous Congress, Duterte failed to railroad this scheme due to contentions between the Senate and Congress on certain key provisions on the transition to the federal form of government.

To pave the way for cha-cha, the Inter-Agency Task Force on Federalism and Constitutional Reform guised it as a new package which emphasizes on economic provisions that will purportedly "open the economy to give everybody hope." Under this slogan, the regime will certainly push for neoliberal consti-

tutional reforms which have long been recommended by the American Chamber of Commerce.

The Task Force is lobbying for "federalism," but as Duterte recognized that there is no broad support for this, he instead declared "even if you don't like federalism, you change the constitution still." According to Eduardo Año, secretary of the Department of Interior and Local Government, the direction of cha-cha may still change in the coming three years.

Details on constitutional amendments proposed by the Task Force are yet to be publicized. But based on the Resolution of Both Houses No. 15 which was issued on December 2018 by the Congress, it is certain that the Philippine Constitution will worsen as it contains proposals to remove provisions which protect the interests of local businessmen and the people, and to liberalize the local economy for transnational corporations. Similarly, it gives Duterte legislative powers and absolute control of the government. In Duterte's "new" constitution, the people's rights will be reduced, and they will lose the right to impeach an incumbent president.

## Intimidating the political opposition

Amid rivalries among his allies, Duterte is ensuring that his political



enemies will neither be able to stand on their own nor earn the support of Congress and other branches of the state. On July 18, he filed a sedition case against political oppositionists, including Leni Robredo, vice president of the Philippines, and 35 others. Also among those charged were LP senators, Otso Diretso candidates (except Mar Roxas), priests and a bishop, lawyers and their supporters.

The Communist Party of the Philippines called this a "intimidation and harassment" attempt against political oppositionists which serves as his warning to those who will refuse his cha-cha agenda. "Pure hogwash," beyond belief," and "extreme harassment and intimidation,"—these were the reactions of the senators and bishop who were accused of inciting to sedition by the regime. The case was based on a video statement of Peter Advincula (alias Bi-koy) who implicated the Duterte family in illegal drug trade. This legal attack clearly aims to harass, intimidate and coerce the opposition to stop from fighting his schemes. This also serves as a warning to Duterte's allies who are planning to unite with the opposition. Earlier, LP declared that it was "open" to joining the supermajority to be established by Cayetano in Congress. AB

# Prevailing civil-military junta

The civilian bureaucracy of the US-Duterte regime is dominated by what is practically a civil-military junta. This July, the number of positions in the government held by retired military and police officials already reached 64. Eleven of them are in his cabinet and spearhead major agencies. This number is set to increase as Rodrigo Duterte is set to appoint another retired soldier to head the Department of Agriculture.

These military and police officials appointed by Duterte are notorious for butchery, subservience to their US master and massive corruption. He rewarded them with civil powers to continue with the brutal counter-insurgency programs which they previously spearheaded as battalion and division commanders in Mindanao. Thus, most of them have had earlier engagements with Duterte when he was still the Mayor of Davao City.

## Militarized departments

Five out of 21 departments of the Duterte government (one is vacant) are directly headed by retired military officials. The Department of Agrarian Reform is also headed by a graduate of the Philippine Military Academy who did not serve as a soldier.

Leading among these militarists is Ret. Gen. Delfin Lorenzana, secretary of the Department of National Defense. He is a rabid implementor of US policies in the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) since he was appointed in 2002 as Defense Attache of the AFP in Washington DC. He worked hand in hand with Duterte in the late 1980s when he became the commander of the Second Scout Ranger Battalion in Davao City.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources is headed by Ret. Gen. Roy Cimatu. He was dubbed "General Pacman" for spearheading the "all-out war" in Mindanao under the regime of Joseph Estrada. When he was still Chief of Staff of the AFP, he was

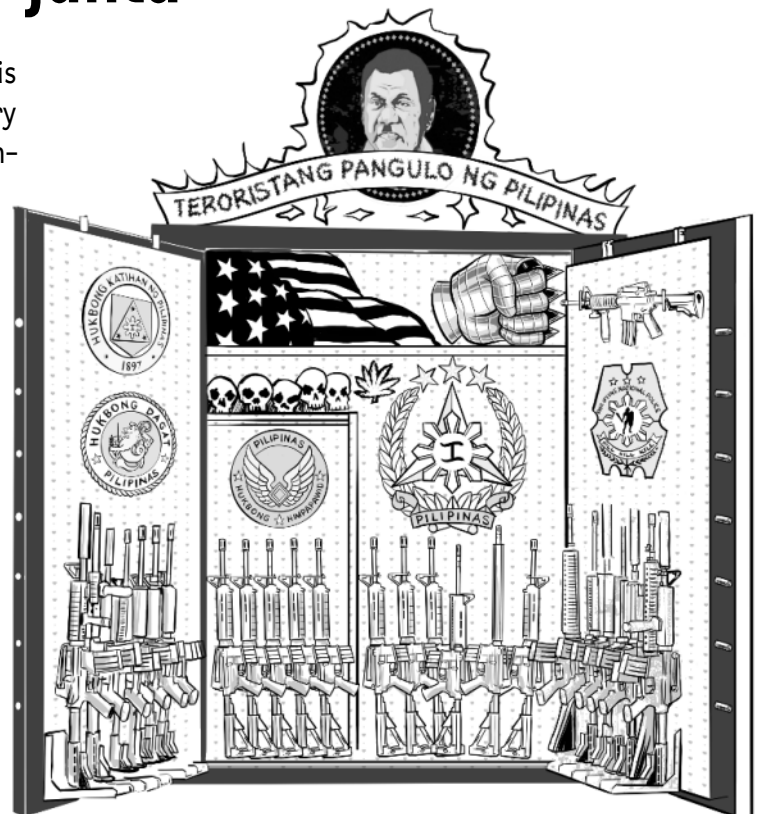
implicated in the "pabaon" scandal in which he pocketed ₱50 million in "retirement benefits."

Eduardo Año, veteran intelligence officer, currently heads the Department of Interior and Local Government which manages the budget of the Philippine National Police (PNP). He is responsible for the abduction of activist Jonas Burgos as he served as the head of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines when the crime was perpetrated. Año was also the commander of the 10th ID when Leoncio Pitao (Ka Parago) was killed hors de combat in 2015.

Gregorio Honasan was also appointed as secretary of the Department of Information and Communication Technology. Honasan were among the soldiers who mounted a coup against former president Corazon Aquino. Meanwhile, Ret. Gen. Rolando Bautista, a military chief of the Duterte regime who recently retired, is the secretary of the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

## Other civilian positions

Duterte also offered them other positions in the civilian bureaucracy outside his cabinet. Among these are the Bureau of Customs (BoC) which is now headed by Commis-



sioner Ret. Gen. Rey Leonardo Guerrero. He replaced Ret. Police Gen. Isidro Lapeña after being implicated in smuggling ₱6.4 billion worth of shabu from China.

Despite this, Lapeña was reappointed as director of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority. Former BoC chief Nicanor Faeldon who was compelled to resign was reappointed as chief of the Bureau of Corrections, the former position of PNP chief Ronaldo de la Rosa before running for senator. Faeldon was involved in two coup attempts against former president Gloria Arroyo.

Meanwhile, Carlito Galvez Jr. was appointed as head of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process after Duterte canceled peace negotiations between the GRP and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines. He was a military officer of Duterte and was involved in a coup attempt in 1989.

Also currently headed by former military officials are the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority and National Security, among others. **AB**

# Villagefolk foil abduction attempt

Residents of Barangay Bito-on in Jaro District, Iloilo City foiled the abduction attempt against Wilfredo “Tay Pido” Panuela, 65, leader of the Katilingban sang mga Imol sa Syudad (Kaisog), by state agents this month.

Two intelligence agents were held and brought by the villagefolk at the barangay hall. Without providing any identification, they claimed that they are members of the Philippine Army and the National Bureau of Investigation. Panuela and his wife Josephine have long been subjected to harassment due to their participation in the struggles of the community.

Maura Abellon, leader of the Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap in Panay and Guimaras, believes that the government is behind the

attempted abduction, attacks and harassment against urban poor leaders who are resisting demolition and condemning human rights violations. On July 8, the group trooped to the police headquarters in Iloilo City.

On July 7, Salvador Romano was murdered while aboard a motorcycle at Aglipay St., Poblacion, Manjuyod, Negros Oriental. He was a former staff of Karapatan Negros and is currently a member of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI). He is the 48th victim of extrajudicial

killing in Negros under the Duterte regime.

Harassment against church people criticizing the regime's crimes and violations of human rights continue unabated in the island. Military elements are currently looking for Rev. Joel Bengbeng of the United Methodist Church (UMC) in Canlaon City and Rev. Brian Ascuit of UMC in San Pedro, Sta. Cruz to purportedly talk to them.

In Ilocos, soldiers are conducting so-called visits under the Joint Campaign Plan Kapanatagan to harass members of the IFI, UMC and the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. **AB**