

# *GMA tells PNP: Look into kidnap report*

By MARVIN SY

Malacañang is taking seriously the report showing an increase in kidnapping cases this year, officials said yesterday.

Press Secretary Cerge Remonde said President Arroyo has ordered the Philippine National Police (PNP) to look into the report of Teresita Ang-See, who said 40 kidnapping cases had already been recorded nationwide in just the first three months of the year.

Ang-See, founding chair of the Movement for the Restoration of Peace and Order, said the group recorded a total of 40 kidnap-for-ransom incidents nationwide from January to March, or half the figure reported for the whole of 2008.

"The PNP is hereby directed to look into the report and, as the President ordered, to do everything within its power and within its means and even ask the assistance of any other agency of government to help ensure the safety of our citizens," Remonde said.

Remonde said the President took the report with serious concern.

Ang-See also said kidnap-for-ransom groups have shifted their target from mainly Chinese-Filipinos to foreign

Turn to Page 11

# GMA tells

From Page 1

nationals and Filipino businessmen.

Ang-See blamed the poor economic conditions for the rise in kidnapping cases this year.

Remonde has assured the public that the PNP would do everything in its power to address the kidnapping cases.

"That's why it is the job of PNP (to ensure) that crime does not pay," Remonde said.

Lawmakers called on the government to immediately implement measures to address the increase in kidnapping incidents.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson said authorities have the tools to implement the measures to prevent kidnapping but they might have only been negligent.

Lacson said the government must be able to eradicate kidnapping, which he said was not acceptable because it was born out of greed and not out of poverty.

"When it's pickpocket or snatching, that's because of poverty, petty theft. When it's kidnapping, it involves million of pesos, that's greed. They (police) should be on their toes to solve this problem," Lacson, a former PNP chief, said.

Senators Loren Legarda and Francis Escudero, for their part, said officials should give priority to the kidnapping problem and other pressing security issues.

Legarda said the kidnap for ransom syndicates are sticking their dirty finger at the administration as if to say, "we're not scared," while the government was posturing as if everything was under control.

She noted the President was planning to go on a series of trips after the Holy Week.

including a side trip to Dubai where she was expected to make business calls.

"There is nothing wrong with the President going on official trips, say, to invite prospective foreign businessmen to do business here, but first things first," Legarda said.

Escudero said the government has sufficient budget to address the problem of kidnapping.

"The President has at her disposal at least P500 million in intelligence funds as allocated for the Presidential Anti-Organized Crime Commission (PAOCC) by this year's national budget. It is time to use it wisely," he said.

"Any police officer worth his salt will tell you that the key to an effective anti-kidnapping drive is good intelligence work. In other words, take out the bad guys before they take out their victims," Escudero said.

Escudero also reiterated the importance of using new technology and the latest communications equipment to be one step ahead of criminal groups.

Other sectors, on the other hand, said the increase in kidnapping incidents does not justify the need for people to own guns to protect them from being kidnapped.

Gunless Society president Nandy Pacheco said arming citizens with guns is not the solution to the problem but sensible implementation of the law.

Pacheco said the government should be stricter in implementing gun control measures. — With Aurea Calica, Evelyn Macairan