

Street crime down

By Alfred Dalizon

POLICE recorded a 23.8 percent decrease in street crimes this year due to intensified police operations to stop criminals, including bag snatchers.

Police chief Director General Hermogenes E.

Ebdane Jr. said the National Capital Region had the most notable crime reduction rate of 40.7 percent, followed by Region 7 which reported a 30.2 percent crime decrease.

Metro Manila and Central Visayas had the most number of street crime, but

incidents tapered down during the second half of the year after President Macapagal-Arroyo scolded the police for their inaction on petty crime.

"We have responded to the clamor for decisive action against snatchers and thieves that were vic-

timizing our citizenry on the streets and we have forced double time to stem the tide and stop the trend," Ebdane said. "The three-pronged thrust of checkpoints, walking the beat and deployment of mobile forces and stations are the key to this down-

trend."

Acting on President Arroyo's orders, the PNP stepped-up its anti-criminality campaign last February amid an alarm raised by the citizenry over the failure of the police to curb the growing street crimes.

DoJ steps up drive vs pornography

THE Department of Justice is bent on stopping the proliferation of indecent and sexually suggestive video discs in coordination with the Videogram Regulatory Board (VRB) and the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB).

Justice Undersecretary Jose Calida yesterday said he would meet with VRB and MTRCB officials to seek their help in the DoJ's campaign against promoters of pornography.

He said the DoJ may even sign an agreement with the two agencies for a more effective drive against pornography.

Calida said he talked with VRB Chairman Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr. after noticing the proliferation of sexy videos featuring bold stars like Diana Zubiri and the Viva Hot Babes.

The Justice official was earlier shocked when he saw the Viva Hot Babes, composed of sexy stars Andrea del Rosario, Miles Hernandez, Katya Santos, Kristine Jaca, Gwen Garcia and Jen Rosendhal, in their naked glory in Hot Stuff magazine. He said he can forgive the stars for posing naked but that he would still pursue a case against them.

Jeffrey Tiangco



VIVA HOT BABES

Trader abducted in Maguindanao

By Bernadette Tamayo

DESPITE intensified military operations against the notorious Pentagon kidnap-for-ransom syndicate, the group struck again in Maguindanao, abducting a businesswoman who earlier refused to give "protection" money.

The victim, Roxas Dacil, was snatched by 40 armed men reportedly led by Commander Usop Hadji Abas alias TMX in Poblacion, SK Pendatun, Maguindanao last Saturday.

Army Spokesman Lt. Col. Joeselito Kakilala said Dacil refused to give in to the group's demands for financial support.

A joint military and police force are pursuing the suspects to rescue the kidnap victim.

Jailbreaks up in 2003

MORE jailbreaks took place this year compared to the same period in 2002, the Philippine National Police reported yesterday.

Statistics released by the PNP showed that from Jan. 1 to Dec. 28, 2003, a total of 55 jailbreaks occurred in different jails and detention centers nationwide, resulting in the escape of 227 prisoners.

Last year, police recorded a total of 38 jailbreaks which resulted in the escape of 114 inmates.

The increase came amid tougher security measures in jails and detention centers following the celebrated escape of Indonesian terrorist Fathur Rohman al-Ghozi and Abu Sayyaf bomb experts Abdulmukim Edris and Omar Opik Lasal early this year.

PNP agents under Director General Hermogenes E. Ebdane Jr. eventually tracked down and killed al-Ghozi and captured Lasal. Edris was killed in a clash with soldiers in Mindanao.

Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose D. Lina Jr. also gathered top security officials in an attempt to discuss new measures to foil jailbreaks. The government also wants to build more jails other detention facilities to prevent over-crowding which is one of the main reasons behind jailbreaks along with poorly-maintained and dilapidated jails.

The latest jailbreak took place at the Don Carlos detention center in Bukidnon last Saturday.

Police said three prisoners — Serilo Lucero, 21; Eladio Salingay, 29; and Ryan Jamero, 17 — bolted the Don Carlos Bureau of Jail Management and Penology jail.

The inmates also stole an M-16 rifle with two fully-loaded magazines and a cal. .38 revolver from the jail's armory.

Members of the Don Carlos Municipal Police Station and the BJMP were still tracking down the escapees. The Army also joined in the manhunt.

Alfred Dalizon

Gutierrez is acting DoJ chief

By Tess Bedico

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo has appointed Justice Undersecretary Merceditas Gutierrez as officer-in-charge at the Department of Justice.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye announced this yesterday, noting that Simeon Datumanong has effectively resigned as DoJ chief after filing his certificate of candidacy to run for a congressional seat last Monday.

"We don't have a permanent replacement yet but it is my understanding that Undersecretary Gutierrez will be the officer in charge," Bunye told a press briefing.

Earlier reports said the DoJ post was previously offered to Rep. Raul Gonzales but the latter declined saying he would rather help the President in the campaign.

There were also rumors that the post was offered to Interior and Local Governments Secretary Jose Lina Jr.

Women take to the Net

ATLANTA, Georgia — Women comprised 51 percent of the nearly \$13.7 billion spent online during the holiday season, according to Goldman Sachs, Harris Interactive and Nielsen-Netratings.

In the UK, 22 percent of female Internet users have bought online, compared with 19 percent of men, according to a new study from the Bank of Scotland. Amidst the explosive Internet growth among women, WSI Internet continues to break franchise records.

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- A.** Economic Intelligence and Investigation Bureau
- B.** Anti-Smuggling Intelligence and Investigation Center
- C.** Presidential Anti-Smuggling Task Force Aduana

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