

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 12, 2010

Lapus: Gang menace must stop

Incidence of violence and harassment inside and outside of school premises alarms parents and education officials.

Separate reports from several regions show that most of these incidents happen in urban centers. In the National Capital Region, four major cities report such problems while Region VII tells of a student shooting resulting to a fellow student's death.

"It is high time this problem is addressed by the community," said Education Secretary Jesli Lapus. "These have serious effects on the attendance and focus of our students particularly in high schools."

While fraternities or sororities are prohibited in public schools, there are groups who recruit students for its members. These students are the ones recruiting from inside the schools, presumably giving them assurance that when they get into trouble, their "brods" will come to their aid.

DepEd Order No. 7 series of 2006 reiterates provisions from previous issuances directing school heads to take more active roles in the prevention of juvenile violence in their areas. The order further instructs them to coordinate with local units of the Department of the Interior and Local Governments, Department of Social Welfare and Development, and the Philippine National Police.

"We will conduct focused consultations in these affected communities with the parents, LGUs, NGOs, and police and address this serious problem in a concerted manner. This growing menace must be stopped," Lapus said.

Skirmishes by groups of young men belonging to different "fraternities" or gangs are often heard on the news. One such incident involved young women, which was reported late last year in Baguio City.

One parent said, "That is why we had to transfer our son to another school. We found out that a band of students from his school wants to gang up on him. This is very distressing for me as a parent."

There were also reports of older and bigger students extorting from younger ones.

"They tell me it is for safe passage and so that they won't hurt me," a school boy said.

Though these do not happen inside the school compound, some students who are considered "enemies" by rival fraternity members are targets of mauling when they leave school on their way home.

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As a result, students become fearful of coming to school which consequently cause them to drop out.

“There are even reports that these kids are subjected to sexual assault and physical battery as initiation rites of their members,” said one official over a phone interview.

The reports even indicated the use of illegal substance as part of the rituals.

Alarmed by these reports, Lapus immediately ordered a survey of schools which face problems of violence.

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