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PRESS BRIEFING OF MS. DAPHNE OSEÑA-PAEZ
WITH DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT (DILG)
SECRETARY BENJAMIN ABALOS JR.
AND DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (DICT)
UNDERSECRETARY DAVID ALMIROL JR.
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MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Magandang umaga, Malacañang Press Corps, at welcome sa ating press briefing ngayong araw, January 24.

During the sectoral meeting led by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. yesterday, the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) and the Anti-Red Tape Authority (ARTA) presented an update on the compliance of local government units on the digitalization of government services.

President Marcos Jr. stressed the need to accelerate the digitalization of all local government unit services as this is the essence of this administration's priorities such as streamlining the bureaucracy, ease of doing business and bringing government services closer to the people.

To tell us more about these, we are joined by DILG Secretary Benjamin Abalos Jr. and DICT Undersecretary David Almirol Jr.

Good morning, Secretaries.

DILG SEC. ABALOS JR.: Good morning, Daphne. Good morning, everyone.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Go ahead, Secretary Abalos.

DILG SEC. ABALOS JR.: Okay. So, there's this pronouncement of the President that digital transformation is one of the key to—things to full economic recovery. Susi po ito 'no para talagang umunlad ang ating ekonomiya, para mabilis ang proseso ng pagkukuha lalo nga ng mga permits.

Alam naman natin na sa local government units ay napakaraming challenges before; number one, the processing is manual, may red tape ka, it's time consuming, and so many excessive forms and documents, komplikado ang proseso and of course, pipila ka – dalawang lines 'no.

So, just to give you a brief background – noong 2010 nagkaroon ng joint memorandum circular ang DILG at ang DTI to streamline business processes, ibig sabihin po ng streamlining ay sisimplehan lang ang proseso nito. Noong 2016 ay pumasok na ang DICT for technology. Noong 2021 pumasok na rin ang ARTA o Anti-Red Tape Authority para i-check munang maigi at i-monitor kung sinong mga nahuhuli po rito.

So, anong ginawa po ng ating departamento? Number one, sa national, on the national side… you need to capacitate – importante po ito 'no. So, provisions of enabling policy, guidelines, technology; and then, you also have to monitor compliance of the LGU 'no.

Now, what are the areas ngayon na nagawa ng DILG? Number one, we are able to streamline business permits and licensing ‘no. Papaano na-streamline ito? From three days to just several minutes; from 27 steps to about three main steps; number two, streamlining o sinimplehan ang proseso ng building permit and certificate of occupancy; number three, streamlining permits for construction of shared towers, fiber optic and underground laying.

Balewala po kung magbabayad tayo ng ganitong digital kung wala tayong mga Wi-Fi – importante mabilis po ito. So, in line with this streamlining of a shared structure, I would like for you to look at this EO No. 32 – ito’y dated July 2023. Anong sinasabi ng EO No. 32 noong July 2023? Ito’y in-streamline ang proseso sa pag-construct ng telecommunications and internet infrastructure para bumilis ang Wi-Fi sa buong bansa.

So, just to give you some of the features here ‘no: Number one, ito’y ang niri-require na lamang ay ang building issued by the LGU; number two, height clearance galing sa CAAP; number three, home owners association and other community clearance; and number four, other requirements as mandated by the Constitution.

Pero ang importante rito is this – tinanggal na ang requirement ng Sangguniang Panglunsod or Bayan Resolution. Hindi na kailangan kasi tumatagal eh, at ang barangay council resolution and certificate of use instead of certificate of occupancy. So kung kukuha kayo ng permit para dumami ang towers natin sa buong Pilipinas for the Wi-Fi – from 13 permits, because of this executive order, naging eight permits na lang; from 86 documentary requirements, naging 35 documentary requirements na lang; and from 241 days… isipin mo, before kukuha ka ng permit for 241 days, ngayon po ay 16 days na lang. So that is with reference sa streamlining permit for fiber optics, underground laying and shared towers.

At hindi lamang iyon, number four, iyong rationalization of fees and charges – alam ninyo naman paiba-iba iyong mga fees and charges, so we are urging them – they’ve got this autonomy – na baka pupuwedeng i-rationalize na lang natin ito and adoption of digital payments.

And because of this ‘no, ako’y nagpapasalamat talaga nang husto dito po sa aking katabi, sa DICT, ang DICT po, kay Secretary Ivan at kay Usec. David Almirol dahil alam ninyo, kung minsan may autonomy tayo, kanya-kaniyang city o municipality ang nagdi-develop ng kanya-kaniyang applications. So, ang ginawa ng DICT, ang kanilang mga talent within the department… sila’y gumawa ng application na libre, walang gastos ang gobyerno – at hindi lamang iyon, binigay nang libre ito sa lahat ng LGUs.

So, kung ikaw ay walang pera, wala kang application – ito DICT na kung saan ang laman naman nito, pinasok namin lahat business processes na streamlined, mga steps; nag-combine kami and ARTA – we call that eLGU. So dahil ditto, just to give you some figures here – number one, ang compliant sa business permit and license… ibig kong sabihin, iyong mga business processes ay sinimplehan na lamang ha, ay 85% of all cities and municipalities all over the country – that is 1,284. Ang presence ng tinatawag na Business One-Stop Shop na requirement din namin ay lumalabas na sa buong bansa, 92% na.

So, okay na iyon – na-streamline mo na, napaikli mo na iyong proseso. The trick here is… susunod na phase is how to digitalize electronic. Okay. So, 60% ng lahat ng cities or municipalities or 921 are digital or automated na po. Ibi-breakdown ko lang ha: Of the 921 [LGUs], 122 LGUs have their own system ‘no, mayroon silang sariling application and; 799, ang ginamit nila ay iyong system ng DICT na libre ‘no, na talagang inikot po talaga ito, nag-caravan po ang DICT dito and I would like to thank DICT here and; of these, 39% or 598 accepts online application ‘no. So, ito

iyong pinupukpok namin at saka iyong mga online payment ‘no. So, this is where we are right now.

And what is the effect of all of these things? Ipapakita ko lang po ito. This is the impact of the ease of doing business. Kung titingnan ninyo, noong 2018, up to 4.7 ang number of registered business ‘no, nag-increase from 1.3 million to 4.7 million – ganoon katindi, because of all of these reforms na ginawa. And not only that ‘no, ipapakita ko rin sa inyo rito iyong fees of collection of taxes ‘no sa local – from 50 billion in 2018, ngayon po ay 208 billion – so, that is times four ‘no. So malaking bagay talaga ito na pasimplehan mo ang proseso ‘no, na you’re into digital. But hindi pa ho titigil kami rito dahil together with DILG, with the DICT and with ARTA, iikot pa kami sa lahat ‘no.

So, ito po ang iri-report namin ngayon, and just to give you a glimpse ‘no – this is just Metro Manila. Ang Metro Manila ayon sa aming data, compliant for business permit and applications lahat; compliant sa Business One-Stop Shop lahat; automated 14 out of 17; online application, 14 out of 17; and online payment, 14 out of 17. So, as you could see ‘no, ganoon na po ang trend na ginagawa namin at ito nga ay iikutin po ni David, ni ARTA, ni Nes Perez (ARTA Director General Nestor Perez) at ng DILG – magtutulungan po kami rito.

Iyon lang po ang mairi-report ko and, Daphne, siguro…

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Usec. Almirol, would you like to add to that?

DICT USEC. ALMIROL JR: Yes po. Actually, exciting news po ito sa ating lahat dahil ang DICT at ang DILG, nag-combine forces po kami hindi lang ma-streamline iyong process kundi para talagang magamit – iyon po iyong importante po dito. Kaya nagkaroon kami ng joint partnership at dinivelop natin iyong tinatawag na Electronic Local Government System.

So, ang eLGU po ay hindi lang mag-streamline ng process kundi para puwede mo nang gawin iyong pag-avail ng LGU services kahit nasa bahay na lang – so, hindi kinakailangan nang pumila pa. So, in the past kailangan mong absent sa trabaho, pipila ka sa city hall, municipal – ngayon kahit nasa bahay ka na lang.

Ang good news dito, together with DILG also ay ni-launch natin together with the President iyong eGov Super App. so, iyong eGov Super App po ay naka-link din po diyan iyong eLGU at hindi lang iyong eLGU ang maa-access mo, pati iyong National ID mo ay maa-access mo na rin. So this will simplify processes.

At noong nakita namin iyong problema talaga iyong paulit-ulit na submission – imagine mo pupunta ka sa isang government agency, submit ka na naman ng data mo, information mo, submit ka ng ID mo, pabalik-balik – so, ang daming repetition of submission of documents – iyon iyong pinakaproblema talaga .

So, ang ginawa ng tatlong ahensiya with the leadership po the DILG – ang DICT naman po ay kami iyong kanilang technology partner lang po dito, support team po kami kasama ang ARTA. Ang ARTA naman po siya naman iyong nagmu-monitor para sa compliance ng ease of doing business. So ang nangyari ay inumpisahan ho namin po sa mga area talaga na talagang walang-walang sistema – ito iyong walang budget at walang pera na gumawa ng isang sistema – so na-implement po ito nationwide.

So, sa ngayon po mayroon tayong 799 na LGUs na gumagamit po ng business permit gamit po ang eLGU system; mayroon na rin po tayong mahigit 200 po na gumagamit din po ng barangay clearance; mayroon din po tayong iyong building permit, mahigit 100 na po na LGU po iyan; at iyong working permit – 55 na LGUs po iyan.

So, nakakatuwa kasi hindi lang natin pinapadami iyong collection 'no ng LGU but ito ay to create a citizen centric, and more streamlined processes para sa ating mga mamamayan.

So, maraming salamat po.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Thank you. We're open for questions. Racquel Bayan, Radyo Pilipinas.

RACQUEL BAYAN/PBS RADYO PILIPINAS: Kay Secretary Abalos. Sir, you mentioned kanina 799 iyong LGUs na gumagamit na ng eGov App. Mayroon ba tayong monitoring, sir, kung ano po kaya iyong equivalent noon sa public consumption or kung ilan po kaya iyong nabawas po roon compared doon sa manual po? Iyong gumagamit na po?

DILG SEC. ABALOS: Well, actually 'no iyong iba kasi hybrid 'no. Ang ginagawa kasi they have got this application already na very capable pero alam mo iyong ibang taxpayer they'd rather pay manually – iyong pupunta na lang sa iyo, magbabayad ka ganoon. Pero of course we've got also some challenges here like for example itong mga Wi-Fi kaya—kanina naman binasa ko sa ating Pangulo, mayroon kaagad na ginawang EO for these shared towers na gagawin to simplify it para mas lalong bumilis ang ating internet sa buong Pilipinas.

So, as far as that 799 LGUs are concerned, ito po ay initial pa lang ito ha, ito ay dahil sa DICT na libre. Tama ang sabi ni David, ito iyong mga walang kakayahan. But what is important is also is capacity building, kasi maski ibigay mo ito na hindi sila capacitated, then you know, they do not have that hardware it will be useless. So we have to train people on the ground bago iikot ito. Thank you.

RACQUEL BAYAN/PBS RADYO PILIPINAS: To Usec naman po. Since iyong connectivity po ay isa po siya sa important aspect ng digitalization, mula po noong i-launch natin iyong Broadband ng Masa, sir, ilan po na po kaya iyong sites na nakapag-install tayo ng free Wi-Fi?

DICT USEC. ALMIROL JR: Hindi sa akin iyong free Wi-Fi, kay Usec. Jeff but as far as I know, nasa 25,000 sites na po iyon pong free Wi-Fi na na-implement before the end of the year of 2023 po.

RACQUEL BAYAN/PBS RADYO PILIPINAS: How about this 2024, sir, mayroon po ba tayong target na i-install ngayong taon?

DICT USEC. ALMIROL JR: I think ang planong doblehin iyong number ng free Wi-Fi especially sa mga LGUs na nangangailangan talaga ng connectivity para ma-implement din po itong tinatawag na eLGU. In fact, ang part ng effort din po ng DICT ay habang nag-i-implement ang DILG, DICT at ARTA ng eLGU kailangan samahan na rin ng connectivity, kailangan magsasabay siya para parallel iyong effort.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Eden Santos, Net 25.

EDEN SANTOS/ NET 25: Good morning po. Secretary, mayroon po ba tayong target date o deadline, timeframe para po ma-digitalize natin iyong lahat ng LGUs nationwide?

DILG SEC. ABALOS: Well, yes. Actually, sa mga nakikinig po ngayon, nagawa na po natin iyong streamlining – ibig sabihin po ng streamlining, sinimplehan na natin ang proseso sa lahat ng aspeto ng business license, occupancy permit. Pero ang susunod naman dito ay ang tinatawag nating paano mo dadalhin ito sa digitalization. Mas mabilis kung cellphone lang. Sa ngayon po, 60 percent na ang na-digital. Pero of course, ibang isyu iyong ilan ba sa kanila ang may kaya nang tumanggap ng bayad, ng online application at makapagbayad – kakaunti pa lang po iyon 'no, depende sa lugar like pinakita ko kanina sa Metro Manila halos lahat wala tayong problema. So, iyon po ang ginagawa namin ngayon ng DICT, ng ARTA – umiikot pa kami.

Siguro ang target for this year is another 240 'no, David, kung hindi ako nagkakamali – another 240 until matapos po namin. Basta hindi po kami titigil dito kasi alam ninyo archipelagic tayo, ilang islands tayo at may challenges talaga iyong iba, talagang wala naman talagang signal. So, iyon po.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Sam Medenilla, Business Mirror.

SAM MEDENILLA/BUSINESS MIRROR: Sir, itatanong lang namin iyong doon sa out of 60 percent ng LGUs na may digitalization na po, ilan po doon iyong nakaka-accept na ng online payment? At saka iyong sa na-mention po nilang 244 LGUs na target this year, ano po iyong expected na increase sa revenue collection ng LGUs?

DICT USEC. ALMIROL JR: Sa ngayon po, ang gumagamit na ng online payment po ay 15 percent – so, medyo madami-dami na po siya. Pero magkakaroon din po kami ng partnership with the Department of Finance para makatulong din po sila sa pag-spread po ng online payment po sa mga LGU.

Doon naman po sa effect ng collection nito ay siguradong lalaki kasi magkakaroon ngayon ng monitoring ang LGU. Dati kasi, hindi kayang i-monitor ng LGU talaga iyong ilan ang nagbabayad ng taxes, ilan ba iyong hindi na nagku-comply, hindi nagri-renew ng business permit kasi nga wala siyang sistema. But ngayon, makikita na niya na halimbawa kung mayroon siyang 1,000 na negosyo in one area – nakita niya na 500,000 lang pala iyong nagri-renew ng business permit niya – so, mayroon siyang datos ngayon na "Aba, marami pala ang hindi nagri-renew ng business permit." So, we're giving them tools now to properly monitor and properly collect at the same time.

So, we believe na the minimum will be 20 to 30 percent magtataas po iyong kanila pong revenue collection.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Eden Santos, again.

EDEN SANTOS/ NET 25: Oho. Sir, iyong sa online payment, paano tayo makakasiguro po na hindi ito magagamit ng mga alam ninyo naman mga scammers, hackers – ma-sure po natin na safe naman iyong ating sistema para maprotektahan iyong ating mga kababayan?

DICT USEC. ALMIROL JR: Ang mangangalaga ng online payment will be DOF, hindi po DICT; tutulong lang kami po sa implementation. Ang maganda ho nito ay mayroon silang mga policy na nilagay, in fact ang eGov platform ay powered by National ID na po siya – so, ibig sabihin, hindi pupuwedeng magkaroon ng scam payment in the future kasi identified dapat iyong nagbabayad at hindi puwedeng kahit na nakaw na credit card or nakaw na online banking o nakaw na e-wallet – hindi puwede dapat magamit iyan, dapat iyong may-ari talaga ng account ang puwedeng gumamit. This will create a solution through the National ID.

So ang good news po, part po ng effort din po ng DICT at implementation po ng DILG sa mga LGU, ay para magamit na po iyong ating National ID, hindi lang po basta lang may card tayo kundi may gamit na talaga siya to protect our citizen.

DILG SEC. ABALOS: Actually, if I might add, Eden. Mas delikado iyong manual payment, mas prone ka na mawalan ang LGUs. Ako naging mayor ako noon, talagang ang dami kong nahuli noong araw na, alam mo iyong carbon paper lalagyan ng ganoon 'di ba, bibigyan mo ng resibo iyon pala hindi pinapasok iyong pera sa loob – maraming ganoon.

So, ang maganda rito with online payment ay direkta talaga ang bayad. Iyon nga lang against iyong mga scammers, hackers, siguro ay matutulungan tayo ng DICT to avoid this. But then, data would really show, mas advantageous talaga sa gobyerno ito at of course sa tao po, mas expedience sa kanila.

IVAN MAYRINA/GMA7: On another issue, addressing the question to the SILG, sir. Sir, what do you know about reports of ICC investigators already finished with their investigation and evidence gathering? And have there been efforts to reach out to the PNP and to the LGUs?

DILG SEC. ABALOS JR.: As far as our office is concerned, the DILG, is I have no knowledge about this, there is no communication with them, nothing at all.

IVAN MAYRINA/GMA7: On another point, have you already been with the UN Special Rapporteur Irene Khan, and if you have, may we get details of what transpired during the meeting?

DILG SEC. ABALOS JR.: Well, not yet. Although I was informed, I have sent our Usec., to meet with her because I've got previous schedules and I think the discussion will be all about ELCAC and, if I am not mistaken, the Council of Anti-Terrorism.

IVAN MAYRINA/GMA7: And what do you intend to take up with Miss Khan?

DILG SEC. ABALOS JR.: Well, wala po tayong itinatago, we will be transparent as we are, we are a democratic country. We follow all the law here, ganoon po. If ever, ganoon po ang magiging discussion po rito.

IVAN MAYRINA/GMA7: Sir, sa ICC, nabanggit ng pangulo kahapon, ang sabi niya huwag sasagutin at may ibinaba na po kayong utos sa mga LGUs na kung sakali man o sa pulisya..?

DILG SEC. ABALOS JR.: We will follow the lead of the president.

GERG CAHILES/CNN: Sir, good morning. Secretary, we just wanna know if you already spoke with the Comelec in relation to the people's initiative, because apparently, you are trying to make some clarifications regarding that. Kasi earlier, the chairman said that they do not have jurisdiction over the signatures. But, as far as he is concerned, barangay officials should not be involved in terms of gathering signatures for the people's initiative. Sir, may we just get information from you?

DILG SEC. ABALOS JR.: Well, thank you for that. Actually, what I have here is a Comelec, a copy of the Comelec resolution. So, this Comelec resolution, if I would direct your attention, if I will be allowed to read it: "After due deliberation and considering the foregoing, the Commission resolved – this is a Comelec en banc – as it hereby resolves to approve the recommendation of

the law department, that elective barangay officials be exempted from the prohibition under Section 261 of the Omnibus Election Code, without prejudice to the powers supervision of the DILG over elective officials and to any administrative liability elective officials may incur under laws other than Section 261 of the Omnibus Election Code." So, if we are going to look at this, sinasabi rito is, they are going to approve the recommendation of their own law department that elective barangay officials be exempted from the prohibition.

That is why I wrote a letter for clarification, kasi mahirap, this is a very sensitive issue. I wrote them and I am just waiting for the reply. This is really a Comelec en banc and if I am not mistaken, this was just dated series of 2022. So, just so, kasi alam mo, marami ito, you've got the Quintos case na sinasabi na parang ganito rin. And then, if I am not mistaken, 2016, there is a joint circular of Comelec then and Civil Service [Commission] na iba naman ang sinasabi. But this is the latest.

GERG CAHILES/CNN: Sir, which en banc resolution, sir, anong number?

DILG SEC. ABALOS JR.: In a resolution dated April 8, 2o22, the Comelec en banc resolves to amend the provisions of Comelec-CSC Joint Circular Number 001, series of 2016. So, they amended it. So ito pala. Can I just give you a copy later?

GERG CAHILES/CNN: Sure, sir. But anyway, the Comelec is saying that the ball is in the hands of DILG since it is not an election period. So, technically it is your decision po. So, kung kayo iyong tatanungin, sir?

DILG SEC. ABALOS JR.: I am just going to meet with him, if ever because this is quite clear; Kasi mahirap magkamali dito, mahirap ding mag-finger pointing dito. I am just citing to you some laws that we have. I just want to be guided by these laws. It's as simple as that, okay? Just so walang pagkakamali. As I have said, this is a very sensitive issue na mahirap magkamali na basta na lang ako gagawa because these are documents na lumabas, I just want to be clarified on this.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay, thank you. Are there any more questions about the digitalization? I think it's been answered

GERG CAHILES/CNN: Sorry, last for the Secretary. Sir, as far as you know, how many barangays or barangay officials are involved in gathering signatures for the people's initiative? Have you received reports on this?

DILG SEC. ABALOS JR.: Well, I haven't really received anything as of the moment. Wala pa, even reports wala namang nagsasabi sa akin.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: If there are any more questions on digitalization, we can go on. Otherwise, I think.

DILG SEC. ABALOS JR.: But of course, the public is more than welcome to, sabihin lang ninyo sa amin. But, again, I should be guided. I just want to be clarified on these laws right now.

SAM MEDENILLA/BUSINESS MIRROR: Pending po doon sa clarification nila with Comelec. Allowed pa rin po ba, tuluy-tuloy pa rin po ba iyong signature gathering or stop po muna?

DILG SEC. ABALOS JR.: Well, ganito po iyan. That is the right of everyone that is why it's in the Constitution. Malinaw naman kung ano iyan, tatlong mode iyan – ConCon, ConAss, initiative – its provided for by our Constitution. As long as you do things legally, that is important. That is why, ako maingat ako rito at nagtatanong-tanong muna ako, ano ba ang dapat muna naming gawin dito, mahirap eh, dahil baka mamaya umoo ako rito, iyon pala all the while mali pala itong ginagawa namin.

Mahirap ito, it's a very sensitive issue right now, umoo ka rito, tapos may mapapahamak, may madedemanda, pati departamento ko. So, it's better to proceed with caution and be prudent about this. Kaya nga sinasabi ko, prudence is very important right now. Okay? Maraming salamat po.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Thank you, digitalization? I think last question, Julie Aurelio.

JULIE AURELIO/PDI: Hi, sir. Can I just be enlightened again about what the Comelec resolution is saying is that it wants to approve the recommendation of its law department that barangay officials be exempted from that provision of the Omnibus Election Code Section 261 (i), that's a Comelec resolution? Since that resolution was passed 2022, nabago na po ba iyong Omnibus Election Code kasi 'di ba dapat hindi puwede mag-supersede ang isang mere resolution or joint circular over a law?

DILG SEC. ABALOS JR.: That is why, Julie, I am trying to be clarified here. I am trying to –anuhin nila, kasi these are actual documents on my table right now. I want to proceed with prudence. They advise me, kung sabihin nilang hindi puwede – hindi puwede. It's as simple as that.

JULIE AURELIO/PDI: So, up to now, you haven't received that clarification from the Comelec?

DILG SEC. ABALOS JR.: Siguro, by the end of the week sana. Mas mabilis, mas matapos na tayo lahat dito, it will be better for everyone. Okay? Maraming salamat po sa inyo.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Thank you very much, Malacañang Press Corps. Thank you, Secretary Abalos and Undersecretary Almirol. Magandang hapon sa inyong lahat. Thank you.

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