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TITLE:

Trust fund for proposed water agency pushed

By JOVEE MARIE N. DELA CRUZ

[@joveemarie](#)

LAWMAKERS are pushing for the creation of a trust fund under the Department of Water Resources (DWR) to finance water sustainability projects in the country.

Davao City Rep. Paolo Z. Duterte said the bill creating the Department of Water Resources (DWR), as the lead agency tasked to secure the country's supply of water and effectively manage the delivery of this vital resource, should include the creation of a Water Trust Fund (WTF) in the Bureau of the Treasury (BTr).

House Bill (HB) 3727, which Duterte filed with Benguet Rep. Eric G. Yap, seeks to address concerns over a looming water and sanitation crises in the country by creating the DWR and the Water Regulatory Commission (WRC).

Duterte said that under HB 3727, remittances from non-tax revenues related to water management, including raw water pricing, permit fees, registration fees, supervision and regulation enforcement fees, filing fees, testing fees and other service income from the use of water resources will form part of the WTF.

The WTF "shall be accounted separately from the government's general revenues and shall be automatically appropriated to the [DWR]," the bill states.

Duterte said proceeds from the WTF will be utilized for water development, water sanitation and waste water treatment and management, and water sustainability programs and projects authorized under the measure.

The bill provides that a maximum of 10 percent of the total income generated from raw water extraction shall be given as share of the concerned local government unit or indigenous people community that owns or has jurisdiction over the specific areas of land where the raw water was sourced.

"There are various government agencies battling this recurring water and sanitation [crises], and there is a need now more than ever to consolidate efforts to avoid duplication of functions, improve public service delivery, and prudently manage limited government resources to address this pressing concern," Duterte said in filing HB 3727.

The lawmaker said that establishing the DWR should not be dismissed as merely an added layer to the bu-

reaucracry "because its creation is not only crucial to averting a water and sanitation crises but is also essential in ensuring that all stakeholders are on the same page in ensuring the effective management of the country's water resources."

Improving the management of water resources covers not only its supply to consumers but also to the agriculture sector, which the government has committed to support to guarantee food security, Duterte said.

Duterte also pointed out that efficient water resources management is a critical factor in protecting the health of Filipinos by ensuring their access to safe, drinking water.

Citing studies done by the global nonprofit organization [water.org](#), Duterte said more than three million people in the country relies on unsafe and unsustainable water sources, while seven million lacks access to improved sanitation.

Duterte and Yap said the creation of the DWR ensures that a primary agency is on top to identify, plan, oversee and manage the efficient use of the country's water resources.

The DWR will also be the lead agency responsible for the planning and policy formulation towards the attainment of universal access to a safe, adequate, affordable and sustainable water supply, as well as improved sanitation services for all Filipinos, the two lawmakers said in their proposed bill.

HB 3727 also seeks to create the WRC and its regulatory units under the DWR to oversee the functions and responsibilities of all water service providers.

As an independent, quasi-judicial body, the WRC is authorized, among other powers, to impose and collect annual levies, fees and surcharges on licensed water supply and sanitation services.

Under the bill, the DWR shall exercise administrative supervision over the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System, National Irrigation Administration and the Laguna Lake Development Authority. The Local Water Utilities Administration shall be transferred from the Department of Public Works and Highways to the DWR.

Moreover, the functions and personnel of the National Water Resources Board and other boards, offices, divisions, bureaus and programs related to the management, planning, surveying, and monitoring of water resources shall be subsumed under the DWR.



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The Manila Times

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Lawmakers bat for creation of Dept of Water Resources

DAVAO City First District Rep. Paolo Duterte and Benguet Rep. Eric Yap lobbied for the quick legislative approval of a bill that will create the Department of Water Resources (DWR) as the principal agency in charge of securing the country's water supply and effectively managing its distribution.

The bill, according to Duterte, should include the establishment of a Water Trust Fund under the Bureau of the Treasury (BTr), which the proposed DWR may use to support water sustainability initiatives.

House Bill 3727 establishes the DWR and the Water Regulatory Commission to address concerns about a

potential water and sanitation crisis in the country.

"There are various government agencies battling this recurring water and sanitation crisis, and there is a need to consolidate efforts to avoid duplication of functions, improve public service delivery and manage limited government resources to address this pressing concern," Duterte said.

He added that the creation of the DWR should not be dismissed as just another layer of bureaucracy because it is important not only to mitigate a water and sanitation crisis, but also to guarantee that all stakeholders are on the same page in ensuring the effective management of the country's water resources. **MOISES CRUZ**



Avoiding a water crisis

Last of two parts

ONE of the best policy moves made by President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. is creating the Water Resource Management Office (WRMO) and making a priority the passage of the bill creating the Department of Water Resources (DWR).

The WRMO was placed under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and is a transitory body pending the creation of the DWR. Among the main functions of the WRMO is to formulate and ensure the implementation of the Integrated Water Management Plan (IWMP) that converges various water-related plans and projects of different agencies.

As for the IWMP, it will be a guiding document for the WRMO for the agency to respond to the various water-related challenges and mobilize the government and various stakeholders.

Meanwhile, the DWR is similar to the Department of Water Management (DWM) that I proposed during the 2019 National Water Summit.

A step in the right direction

These moves by President Marcos is a step in the right direction in



MOVING FORWARD

WILLIAM D. DAR

avoiding a severe water crisis in the future, as one of the perennial problems in water management in the Philippines is the lack of an agency that will take the lead in conserving, rejuvenating and developing the country's water resources and infrastructure.

I also believe that the Philippines still has adequate freshwater resources and with a high rainfall of about 2,400 millimeters per year, the country can avoid a severe water crisis. However, challenges like climate change, destructive human practices, a growing population, and a lack of an agency like the DWR or DMW has resulted in a number of areas in the Philippines experiencing water shortages.

Worse, there are farmers who are complaining of lack of water, especially during El Niño episodes.

In the summer of 2019, a water shortage hit Metro Manila that I hope won't be repeated this year as an El Niño episode is already affecting parts of the country. The good news is Metro Manila now has an additional source of freshwater in Laguna Bay in addition to the Angat and Ipo dams.

The same, however, cannot be said for Metro Cebu with the Metropolitan Cebu Water District (MCWD) claiming a supply deficit of at least 330,000 cubic meters of water per day.

To identify solutions to avoid a possible water crisis in Metro Cebu, the Cebu Water Summit was held on March 27 to 28, 2023 at the Bai Hotel Cebu in Mandaue City that gathered government and nongovernment agencies, experts, the academe and the private sector.

Among the solutions identified is the building of dams and at least 11 water desalination plants, which is no small task. The MCWD believes sourcing water from the sea and processing it in the desalination plants is more sustainable than sourcing surface freshwater or deep wells.

Now, how many more metropolitan or urban areas in the Philippines will have water shortages in the future?

And if there will be water shortages in urban areas, then how much will be left for growing food? Remember that 70 to 80 percent of freshwater use in the Philippines is for agriculture.

Taking advantage of the rainy season

Meanwhile, during the typhoon



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season, heavy rains inundate or flood the cities and farming areas, and wash away precious topsoil to the seas, causing siltation. Also, soil that flows out to the sea can affect the production of fishing areas, especially those near the coastal areas.

But the heavy rains can actually be a blessing in replenishing and impounding water, especially if we take into account that rainwater harvesting in the Philippines is a very low 4 to 5 percent. In India, which has a third of the Philippines' annual rainfall, the harvesting of rainwater is more than 60 percent.

We even have a law mandating rainwater harvesting from the barangay level, or Republic Act (RA) 6716, also known as the "Rainwater Collector and Springs Development Act of 1989."

But I still find it almost unthinkable that 34 years have passed since the enactment of RA 6716, and here we are grappling with a future water crisis because 95 to 96 percent of the country's rainfall flows out to the seas.

RA 6716 also mandates the construction of water wells and development of springs and rehabilitation of existing water wells in all *barangay* (villages) in the country. And one proven

method to rehabilitate water and wells, and develop springs in the Philippines is aquifer recharging, which I believe should go hand in hand with rainwater harvesting.

Let me emphasize anew that rainwater harvesting and aquifer recharging are low-tech approaches that even elementary students can fully understand if explained to them. So, there is no need for bureaucrats to acquire a PhD to understand what rainwater harvesting and aquifer recharging are all about.

The need for convergence

However, we cannot count solely on the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) to implement RA 6716. For one, the DENR and the Department of Agriculture (DA) possess more expertise on water.

But why can't the DPWH, DENR, DA and other agencies with mandates on water get their acts together in resolving water issues? My answer to that is, we need the DWR or DWM the soonest time possible, unless we want to usher in a severe water crisis in the future.

A department for water issues will also help steer private investments and forge public-

private partnerships to develop more water infrastructure in the Philippines, like irrigation systems, massive rainwater harvesting systems, and even larger dams.

Also, that department can accelerate research on our country's water resources, and develop and implement solutions to make sure the country can have enough water even during El Niño spells.

One groundbreaking research that should be initiated is how much surface water and groundwater are being used to irrigate each crop, especially those that need a lot of water like rice. This is being conducted every five years by the United States Geological Survey, with the latest findings showing less water is being used for major crops as farmers have started utilizing more efficient irrigation methods.

All told, the DWM or DWR can effectively converge the efforts of concerned government agencies, local government units, the private sector and stakeholders like farmers and Indigenous peoples in addressing water issues in the country.

Hence, a whole-of-nation approach is needed to resolve the country's water issues, and we should start taking action now!



MGB investigates sinkhole in Calayan

TUGUEGARAO CITY: Through its Geosciences Division, the Mines and Geosciences Bureau in Region 2 (Cagayan Valley) conducted an investigation of the reported sinkhole collapse incident on Calayan Island.

Jeremiah Caido, MGB Region 2 senior geologist, said the bureau conducted an investigation in response to the request letter of the local government unit (LGU) of Calayan based on the assessment reports by the town's disaster risk reduction and management office.

Reports showed that on Feb. 24, 2023, the sinkhole collapse occurred in front of a partially constructed residential house in Barangay Magsidel.

It said an owner of a residential house identified as Franklin Orel saw the ground collapse behind his son who was parking his sidecar in front of their house during a heavy downpour at around 4 p.m.

On March 2, the Office of the Civil Defense in Region 2 and Calayan LGU reported the enlargement of the sinkhole with visible surficial or cursory and shallow manifestations of tension cracks.

Based on the initial MGB investigation, the base of the sinkhole was partially filled with water and was observed to rise and recede in response to tidal changes.

Caido explained that the water

level within the sinkhole rises during the high tide and recedes during the low tide.

"This implies it could be connected to an underground stream/conduit leading to Babuyan Channel," he said, adding that the sinkhole has already progressed toward the adjacent municipal road.

Also during the field investigation, a team led by Caido and Science Research Specialist Jose Santiago Feril also conducted a sinkhole inventory within the village interview with residents and barangay (village) officials and mapping of limestone exposures.

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Environmental diplomacy and negotiations

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board of regents (BOR) of the University of the Philippines is now dominated by controversy because of the selection of the chancellor of UP Diliman, and the perception by many Diliman constituents that it lacked transparency and ignored their preference for a particular candidate.

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We saw images of acts that would amount to vandalism. While this issue needs serious consideration and reflection, what should not be lost is that at the same meeting, other decisions were made that have important ramifications, and are so remarkable that they need to be celebrated.

One of these decisions made by the board during the meeting was the approval of the proposal from the School of Environmental Science and Management (Sesam) of the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) to set up a PhD program in environmental diplomacy and negotiations. It was a momentous decision not only because this is the first program of its kind in the country and in the region, perhaps even in the world. It is of utmost importance simply because it addresses a demand for professional expertise that is needed not only by our country but by the global community.

Skeptics who doubted this program raised the issue of whether there is a need to have a specialist on environmental diplomacy when we already have trained diplomats. What this doctoral degree program will achieve is to bring science into the process. Indeed, there are professional diplomats, but as the history of many environmental global agreements has shown, such as those involving biodiversity, forestry, climate change, desertification, the wetland ecosystems and wildlife trade, these agreements were reached not only with the involvement of professional diplomats but with a strong and active participation of the scientific community.

In international relations theory, we political scientists would refer to state-to-state diplomacy as Track 1 processes where state political actors, such as heads of states and governments and their diplomatic representatives, engage in bilateral and multilateral discussions. However, and particularly on issues and topics like the environment, the need to involve scientists and academics is recognized, and is given space. Global agreements in these areas are forged with their participation. Scientists are engaged in what we refer to in the discipline as Track

2 platforms, where non-state actors who are experts in the appropriate scientific disciplines engage in what can be construed as "backchannel" diplomacy and interact with the decision-making process by providing technical inputs. The channels where these happen are done through scientific meetings and workshops attended not only by scientists but by key decision-makers. This domain is what we refer to as an epistemic community.

What the PhD in environmental diplomacy and negotiations would achieve is to provide an avenue to produce someone who is both a diplomat and an environmental scientist, effectively enabling a platform where the process of negotiations is now turned into an epistemic community, and where the latter is now integrated in the formal diplomatic processes. We no longer need a scientist to advise a diplomat. We will have experts who started out as diplomats but acquired knowledge and skills in environmental science, or as environmental scientists who are now adept with the theories and practices in diplomacy and environmental negotiation.

Skeptics may also raise the issue of the special need for this expertise in the area of the environment. Actually, this program is admittedly just addressing the tip of the larger demand for expertise in science diplomacy which should also be developed with expertise in agriculture, health, energy and other areas of human concern that require science-informed diplomats. This does not diminish the argument for experts in environmental diplomacy, but even amplifies it, particularly when we consider the fact that the greatest threat to humanity is climate change. This is an issue that has serious implications on food security and health not only of humans but also of the environment. It also has a significant intersectionality with energy issues and concerns.

Professional expertise in environmental diplomacy and negotiations is highly valued at a time when misinformation and disinformation abounds, particularly about climate change, and when the decision-making of states is even undermined with the election and appointment of climate change deniers in key government positions. It should also be impressed on people that many of the political conflicts that we are facing right now have environmental roots and causes. The civil war in Northern Africa is largely because of social discord brought about by ecosystem degradation which aggravated territorial disputes among warring groups. The current crisis in the Middle East, particularly in the Levant, started with the degradation of lands which forced people to migrate to cities. This served as powder kegs that dramatized political cleavages not only between citizens, but amplified the inability of states to govern, which only further hastened their failure and breakdown. The current conflict in the West Philippine Sea is largely about access to important environmental and natural resources.



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Environmental diplomacy and negotiations

However, diplomacy is not just about mediating conflict between states. It is also needed in negotiating a solution to local and internal disputes, such as the one in the Masungi Georeserve, or in the Kaliwa Dam. Even our local insurgency problem has an environmental dimension, particularly on the issue of denial of access to lands and resources, and the degradation of these lands that aggravated the social conditions experienced by rural and indigenous peoples that fanned their discontent and pushed them to take up arms.

I have a personal stake in this important initiative which the UP BOR has green-lighted. I am now part of the academic unit, Sesam, that will be largely responsible for the course offering. We are celebrating its approval, even as we are in deep awe of the enormous challenge and responsibility now vested on our shoulders not only by UP but by the country. It may be self-serving, but this has enormous significance to my personal homecoming and redemption. This program is the very reason why despite the strong lobby against my hiring, I am now back at UPLB.



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Empress oil leak slows down

There is "good progress" in the response to the oil spill from the sunken tanker *Princess Empress* following bagging operations conducted by remotely operated vehicles from Japan and the United States, according to the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG).

Oil discharges from the *Princess Empress* have started to slow down as the leaking areas decreased from 23 on March 20 to 11 on April 2, Vice Admiral Rolando Punzalan Jr., PCG deputy commandant for operations, said.

"Eleven *na lang yung* visible *na may* discharge and intermittent... *Nag-slow down na yung* discharges. It gives us ample time to continue with shoreline cleanup and determine the next phase," Punzalan said.

He said the next steps after bagging operations are siphoning and hot tapping.

Despite the threat of the oil spill, Oriental Mindoro's top tourist spot Puerto Galera remains open, Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia-Frasco reiterated as she visited the area yesterday.

Frasco joined a scuba diving activity in La Laguna Point, a popular diving spot in Puerto Galera.

She said Puerto Galera remains "unaffected" by the oil spill from *Princess Empress*.

Frasco said her visit to the beach spot aims to encourage more tourists to continue visiting the destination and show support for the local government and tourism stakeholders of the town.

Data from the municipal tourism office showed that 18,757 tourists visited the island during the Holy Week break.

Pola mayor slams one-time claim offer

Meanwhile, Mayor Jennifer Cruz of Pola, Oriental Mindoro questioned the one-time offer of the insurers of *Princess Empress* for those affected by the oil spill.

In a radio interview, Cruz said she advised her constituents against filling out claims forms.

"I advised them not to sign as it was stated that once you apply for a claim, you can no longer apply if the effect of the oil spill will last for six months. I asked my constituents to read the provisions before signing as it is a one-time offer. You cannot file another claim," she said.

Cruz said the insurance company has yet to respond to her query on the impact of the claim on the filing of cases against the owner of the sunken vessel.

In another radio interview, Center for Environmental Concerns Philippines Research coordinator Jordan Fronda issued a warning that the oil slick may reach other areas in Luzon and the Visayas.

"Based on our projection, the oil spill will persist until the sunken vessel is emptied. It is possible that the oil slick will reach major islands of Luzon, and even in the Visayas because of the volume of the oil," Fronda said.

- Robertzon Ramirez, Bella Cariaso, Ghio Ong



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Philippine Coast Guard personnel collect oily debris in Sitio Sabang, Barangay Tinogboc on Semirara Island in Caluya, Antique on Tuesday in this photo courtesy of the PCG. Caluya is among the areas affected by the oil spill from the sunken M/T Princess Empress.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

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MONITORING MOUNT APO Employees from the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (Penro) in Davao del Sur are among the members of the composite team led by Regional Executive Director Bagani Fidel Evasco, who is an acclaimed mountaineer himself, and PENR Officer Alberto Bandiola that embarked on a monitoring mission to assess the trails and campsites within the Mount Apo Natural Park from April 3 to 10, 2023. The team also verified the climbing permits of the trekkers and reminded them of the zero waste policy and mountaineer's creed of leaving no trace behind. The team also scouted possible water sources in the event of a fire incident. The data gathered by the team shall be presented to the Protected Area Management Board, the highest policymaking body in Mount Apo Natural Park. The Digos City and Bansalan trails of Mount Apo are now open to the public. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



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Will Earth soon become uninhabitable?

DURING the five-day Holy Week respite, I was able to watch "The Silent Sea" on Netflix. (Spoiler alert.) This fiction series is set in the late 2060s, 10 years "after a global drought occurred. Lakes, rivers, and reservoirs around the world have dried up and desalination plants could no longer produce enough potable water, leading governments to enact harsh, unjustly stratified rationing measures." A team of scientists was sent by ROK's Space and Aeronautics (SAA) division to an abandoned research station on the moon to retrieve samples of "lunar water."

What strikes me most is the scary theme about the near future, not the technical aspect of the film or the actors' performance. A global drought in 27 years is unimaginable — unless global warming and climate change are not controlled now.

Complex problem

Experts have spoken. To stabilize climate change, stop using fossil fuels to generate electricity.

But the climate change problem is more complex than it seems. It is not just a matter of planting more trees. *The Economist* posted on April 5, 2023: "The trouble is that the scale of changes needed to adapt the world's electricity grids is vastly underappreciated. Too little investment is taking place. Planning rules get in the way. And, in a deep and damaging irony, some of the biggest advocates of slowing climate change do not accept the logic that to do so requires building more."

We need to build more green and renewable sources of electricity. With more electricity available, the world would be riding on electric vehicles rather than on those that burn dirty fossil fuels. When poor countries have access to clean electricity, there will be lesser emissions from biomass burning. The possibilities are endless, but what's hindering this ideal situation from happening?

The International Energy Agency, an intergovernment think tank, reckons that worldwide spending



EDUCATION &
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**ERNIE
CECILIA, DPM**

on electric grids is currently around \$260 billion a year: far less than is needed and, tellingly, less than is invested in upstream oil and gas."

There has been much rhetoric and polemics about green and renewable energy, but still our dominant energy sources are fossil fuels — gas, oil and coal. I salute those who operate hydroelectric power plants and wind farms in the Philippines. At this time, countries should already have plans to phase out all forms of energy-generating plants that contribute to global warming.

I agree that the climate change issue is of a different magnitude from other environmental issues. If we need to stop pollution that comes from burning fossil fuel, we must transition immediately to renewable sources of energy. But, in order to build renewable power installations, there is a need to mine the minerals to be used. There will be construction activities as well. In the transition, there will be the usual economic activities that environmentalists tend to criticize.

In a change process, there is often a bitter pill to swallow.

Wake-up call

Whenever the issue of climate change is being discussed, many people think about this "human-induced" phenomenon as something that can happen in the future. It is ongoing now!

When temperatures become hotter, people shrug it off as expected ... because summer is near. When I was young, my parents would remember severe typhoons at 15 to 20 years' intervals. Lately, the 10 strongest typhoons in the Philippines came almost one year after the other: Pepeng (Parma, 2009); Pedring (Nesat, 2011); Pablo (Bopha, 2012); Yolanda (Haiyan, 2013); Glenda (Rammasun), 2014; Lando, (Koppu, 2015); Ompong (Mangkhut, 2018); Rolly (Goni, 2020); Ulysses (Vamco,

2020); and Odette (Rai, 2021). And don't forget Yoling and Ondoy, too.

Global warming also causes increased drought, rising ocean temperatures, loss of species, food shortages, more health risks, and poverty and displacement.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) of the US Department of Commerce reported that "Global temperatures rose about 1.98 degrees Fahrenheit (1.1 degrees Celsius) from 1901 to 2020." Climate change also affects "water, energy, wildlife, agriculture, ecosystems, and human health."

NOAA's global climate dashboard gives useful information, as it monitors the planet from pole to pole. Here are a few relevant global climate data from NOAA:

- Global temperatures rose about 1.98 degrees Fahrenheit from 1901 to 2020.

- Sea level has accelerated from 1.7 mm/year throughout most of the 20th century to 3.2 mm/year since 1993.

- Glaciers are shrinking average thickness of 30 well-studied glaciers of the 20th century has decreased by more than 60 feet since 1980.

- The area covered by sea ice in the Arctic at the end of summer has shrunk by about 40 percent since 1979.

- The amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has risen by 25 percent since 1958, and by about 40 percent since the First Industrial Revolution.

- Snow is melting earlier compared to long-term averages.

On Feb. 28, 2022, Seth Borenstein wrote in the Associated Press, "The UN report warns climate change will likely make the world sicker, hungrier, poorer and more dangerous in the next 18 years with an 'unavoidable' increase in risks."

There's no telling when the world will eventually become uninhabitable because of global warming. But imagine this: If you find the extreme heat or cold unbearable now, listen to the UN science report: "Today's children who may still be alive in the year 2100 are going to experience four times more climate extremes than they do now even

with only a few more tenths of a degree of warming over today's heat. But if temperatures increase nearly 2 more degrees Celsius from now (3.4 degrees Fahrenheit), they would feel five times the floods, storms, drought and heat waves."

The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reported: "The cumulative scientific evidence is unequivocal: Climate change is a threat to human well-being and planetary health. Delaying cuts in heat-trapping carbon emissions and waiting on adapting to warming's impacts will miss a brief and rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a livable and sustainable future for all."

As of last year, at least 3.3 billion people or 40 percent of the world's population "are highly vulnerable to climate change and 15 times more likely to die from extreme weather. Large numbers are being displaced by worsening weather extremes. And the world's poor are being hit by far the hardest."

"Climate change is killing people," said Helen Adams of King's College London. "Yes, things are bad, but actually the future depends on us, not the climate."

According to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, "The IPCC report is an atlas of human suffering and a damning indictment of failed climate leadership. With fact upon fact, this report reveals how many people, and the planet are getting clobbered by climate change."

Perhaps, I had been watching too many movies lately — "The Day After Tomorrow," "The Day the Earth Stood Still," "The Inconvenient Truth," "Interstellar" and "Geostorm" — and creating my neurosis tomorrow today.

Ernie Cecilia is the chairman of the Human Capital Committee and the Publication Committee of the American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines (AmCham); chairman of the Employers Confederation of the Philippines' (ECOP's) TWG on Labor Policy and Social Issues; and past president of the People Management Association of the Philippines (PMAP). He can be reached at erniececilia@gmail.com



BBM OKs single operating system for gov't transactions

By **ALEXIS ROMERO**

President Marcos has approved the setting up of a single operating system for all government transactions, with agencies directed to help local government units (LGUs) adopt better business permits and licensing systems to attract more investors.

Marcos said agencies must take into account the differences between national bureaucracy and various local governments when crafting a code or policy on bureaucratic efficiency.

He stressed that there are technological reasons as well as political and local considerations to comply with the law, and the government has to deal with these.

"I think it may help when you're writing the code or when you're putting the system together, you're going to think about the differences between the national bureaucracy and the different LGUs," Marcos said during a sectoral meeting on improving bureaucratic efficiency.

"Those are the things that we still

work with. The questions we were trying to bring it down to that level, and the local governments are really part of that thing. You've seen how it can happen. That's what we need to address," he added.

Officials who were present during the meeting told Marcos the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) and Anti-Red Tape Authority (ARTA) are mapping the processes of different agencies so they can be collated into a single system.

They noted that local governments are covered by the ease of doing business law.

The law requires local governments to set up electronic business one-stop-shops that will standardize requirements.

Stakeholder consultations were held to look at agencies' processes and requirements and to encourage them to use a unified application form linking them to the network that sets up a one-stop-shop, the officials said.

The proposal is to extend the

coverage to other types of business like what the trade department did to the one-stop-shop for big-ticket investments, they added.

"The President also directed the DICT and the ARTA to assist LGUs in adopting business permits and licensing systems in all cities and municipalities," a Palace statement released yesterday said.

Officials said they are also considering integrating all the processes for migrant workers and the maritime and shipping industries.