

'Renewable' projects eyed by six firms

THE NATIONAL Power Corp. (Napocor) is in talks with six firms to invest in renewable energy projects in places not reached by the country's major power transmission grids, the company's top official said.

Napocor President Froilan A. Tampinco identified the firms as Sta. Clara Power Corp. and Korea Electric Power Corp. for hydropower generation; Philippine National Oil Co.-Renewables Corp. for solar energy; Enertine and Clenergen Corp. for biomass; and Paris-Manila Technology Corp./Vergnet Groupe for wind and diesel projects.

"[These power companies] have met and explored with Napocor opportunities for investments and cooperation in the use of renewable energy sources for possible power generation," Mr. Tampinco told reporters last week.

The projects will be under Napocor's Small Power Utilities Group (SPUG), which is the state-owned company's missionary electrification arm. SPUG provides power to remote islands and far-flung island villages which are not connected to any of the country's main grids.

Napocor's main grid operations are now being handled by the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. following the passage of the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001.

Mr. Tampinco added that Clenergen Corp., a British company, will bring in a new technology that will use a genetically modified bamboo specie as feedstock for the biomass plant.

"It's a certain [species] of bamboo... which is disease-resistant and propagates fast. They plan to set it up and we are looking for an appropriate site for them," Mr. Tampinco said.

"We are still looking at the economics of it but they are willing to come in together with financing so this is something we are looking into," Mr. Tampinco added.

Napocor's SPUG operates 304 generating units with a total capacity of about 129 megawatts.

It serves 78 island grids and eight isolated grids providing electricity to 42 customers consisting of 39 electric cooperatives and three local government units.

SPUG operations are also subsidized by consumers under the universal charge component of electricity bills. — **Jose Bimbo F. Santos**