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# Duterte signs law to accelerate Philippines' total electrification

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PRESIDENT Rodrigo R. Duterte has signed into law a measure promoting the use of microgrid systems in unserved and underserved areas to accelerate total electrification of the country.

Signed on Jan. 21, Republic Act. No. 11646 aims to provide continuous power to remote communities, while prioritizing low-cost, renewable and environment-friendly sources of energy.

Unserved areas are those with no electricity access, while underserved areas are currently served by distribution utilities (DU) whose supply is less than 24 hours daily.

Ownership and operation of a microgrid system in the unserved and underserved areas will not be considered a public utility operation under the law.

Under the law, microgrid systems providers (MGSPs) will not be required to secure a franchise from Congress, but will need an authority to operate from the Energy Regulatory Commission.

MGSPs may provide power generation and distribution services in distribution utility-identified unserved areas, as well as Department of Energy-declared unserved and underserved areas after the conduct of a competitive selection process (CSP).

The CSPs will be "simple, uniform, streamlined and transparent."

In case there are no participants or awarded MGSP in the CSP for a particular area, the National Power Corp. will undertake a missionary electrification project in the area.

The government's 100% electrification target may be achieved as early as June given adequate funding, the state-run National Electrification Administration (NEA) said in July last year.

At that time, NEA said that about 12,000 sitios still "need to be connected to the grid." The agency estimated a budget of P18 billion to accomplish the goal. — **K.A.T. Atienza**

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