



## Korean firm invests P2-B for solar farm in Bacolod City

By Nanette Guadalquiver

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Mary Grace Helene Buhain (3<sup>rd</sup> from left), president and chief executive officer of Amatera Renewable Energy Corporation, and Charles Ji (4<sup>th</sup> from right), president of TPC Construction Corp., with landowner Ma. Teresa Lacson (4<sup>th</sup> from left), Amatera chief operations officer and Vista Alegre village chief Jose Maria Leandro Roberto de Leon (3<sup>rd</sup> from right), and other officials of both companies after the signing of the memorandum of understanding at L' Fisher Hotel in Bacolod City on Thursday night (Jan. 17, 2019). *(Photo by Nanette L. Guadalquiver)*

**BACOLOD CITY** -- A 50-megawatt solar power plant will soon rise in the village of Vista Alegre in this city. The development of the first large-scale renewable energy project in Bacolod, with an estimated cost of PHP2 billion, kicked off with the signing of the memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the partner-developers held at L' Fisher Hotel here Thursday night.

Mary Grace Helene Buhain, president and chief executive officer of Amatera Renewable Energy Corp., and Charles Ji, president of TPC Construction Corp., signed the agreement on behalf of their respective companies.

"The vision of Amatera goes beyond business, but the social responsibility to benefit everyone," Buhain said.

The Bacolod-based company, which is leasing the 74-hectare family-owned land for 25 years to the Korean firm, had secured a clearance from the Department of Energy (DOE) to conduct grid impact studies on the Vista Alegre property in early 2016.

Its project was then included on the agency's list of awarded solar projects in June that year.

Buhain said the project consultants will come from Korea, but they will also hire locals for the construction, which is expected to start this year.

In his speech, Ji said the signing of the MOU was the start of the beautiful partnership and collaboration between the two companies.

"We are thankful for the trust given to our company, (for us) to work together for this project," he added.

Engineer Hanshel Layaoen, technical consultant for Amatera, said about 100 employees would be hired for the technical and labor aspects, and at least 300 workers more would be needed to complete the project in six to seven months.

Both companies aim to start the commissioning by 2020, which is also the scheduled completion of the Cebu-Negros-Panay 230-kilovolt Backbone Project of the National Grid Corp. of the Philippines (NGCP).

The influx of solar power plants in Negros Occidental in recent years caused the main line, transmission, and interconnection lines to congest, according to the DOE.

Considering the congestion, Layaoen said the construction of the Bacolod solar farm project cannot proceed without the transmission utility's backbone project.

Vice Mayor El Cid Familiaran, who attended the signing event, welcomed the development of the renewable energy project in Bacolod as he recognized that solar is now at the center of local energy transformation.

“This is the first large-scale solar energy source in Bacolod and a step towards a greener and more sustainable city,” said Familiaran, who is currently the acting mayor since Mayor Evelio Leonardia flew to the United States to witness the fight of Senator Manny Pacquiao in Las Vegas on Sunday. *(PNA)*

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