

Lanao del Sur residents are confident Malacañang's technical and fiscal intervention on the power woes besetting the province will lead to a general election of new set of officers for the controversial Lanao del Sur Electric Cooperative.

Gov. Mujiv Hataman of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao on Friday told reporters President Benigno Aquino III had even committed a P70 million grant for the improvement of Lasureco, from its present "problematic state" into a legitimately functioning power cooperative.

Local officials said the Lasureco management has unscrupulously been supplying electricity to selected households in Lanao del Sur without calibrating meters, an anomalous practice that resulted to its having incurred more than P6 billion-worth of unpaid generation fees with the National Power Corporation.

Local executives, whose towns are bereft of electricity for years now despite the presence of hydroelectric plants in the province, said last Thursday's meeting in Marawi City, among Local Government Secretary Manuel Roxas II, Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin, and complaining Maranao stakeholders, has heightened their hopes of seeing a peaceful end to their problem.

Hataman said President Aquino had also ordered the creation of a special task force to help manage the Lasureco until a new set of duly elected cooperative officials are installed to office.

"That was the purpose of Secretary Roxas and Secretary Gazmin's coming over to Marawi City last Thursday. They wanted to see how they can best address this long-time blackout in so many towns in Lanao del Sur," Hataman said.

Hataman said the ARMM government can only extend limited support to the task force since functions and powers of the Department of Energy have not been devolved to the executive department of the autonomous region.

"Our local government department can also help push the mayors in the province to help

complement the efforts of Malacañang to address the problem squarely,” Hataman said.

He said the ARMM’s Cooperatives Development Authority can assist in organizing the power consumers in Lanao del Sur into a functional cooperative.

Maranao mayors and Lanao del Sur Gov. Bombit Adiong, Jr. have blamed the “mismanagement” of the Lasureco by its incumbent officials as the main reason for the power outage in almost all towns in the province.

“There is a task force now that will attend to that problem,” Hataman said.

Hataman said the special task force, whose members shall include representatives from the military, the Philippine National Police, the National Electrification Administration, and the DoE, will help supervise the installation of power calibration meters on houses of consumers in Lanao Del Sur’s more than 30 towns.

“This approach, in a way, shall group together all consumers as legitimate members of the provincial power cooperative. They can have an election of new Lasureco officers probably before yearend, or in early 2015, hopefully,” Hataman said.

The incumbent officials of the Lasureco were reportedly installed only on appointment basis by the NEA, discharging functions without any electoral mandate from members of the cooperative.

“We are optimistic we can have an election of Lasureco officers soon. This optimism is also being felt overwhelmingly by officials of local government units in the province and their respective constituents,” Adiong said.