

American firm plans solar plant in Cambodia

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US-BASED solar energy developer Omni Navitas has announced a plan to set up a US\$500 million (Bt15.7 billion), 150-megawatt solar energy farm in Cambodia. Omni Navitas chief executive officer Jim McAuliffe said this would make it the largest solar farm in Southeast Asia by capacity.

After meeting with McAuliffe last week, Chhuon Dara, a secretary of state at the Ministry of Commerce, welcomed the launch of the renewable energy project.

"We support this initiative and will provide facilitation on this investment project, especially because it is a clean energy project," he said. "If they can sell the electricity to the government at the same price as the existing power plants, it will be a great help."

In his comments to local media after the meeting, McAuliffe said his company would need about 500 hectares of land to build the solar farm, estimating the

construction process alone would employ 3,000 local workers.

"We are here to propose one of the largest solar projects in Southeast Asia for Cambodia," he said yesterday. "We want to bring in over \$500 million of [foreign direct investment] into Cambodia . . . We hope that we will open the door for more US investment in Cambodia."

McAuliffe did not provide details about the location of the project and did not immediately reply to additional questions. A man who was translating McAuliffe's comments for journalists and who identified himself as a representative of a Cambodian firm that was participating in the project, said the solar farm would be built in Koh Kong province.

McAuliffe said he planned to meet with the Council for the Development of Cambodia (CDC) and had already negotiated potential prices for electricity with state-run Electricite du Cambodge (EDC), though there was no agreement yet.

Spokespeople for the Ministry of Mines and Energy, EDC and CDC could not be reached for comment.