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Japan firm aids Thai solar energy expansion

JAPANESE solar-power company Yokohama Holdings has set up a joint-venture firm, Yokohama Holdings Energy (Thailand), with Thai investor Kittisak Jampathip-phong, a major shareholder of property brokerage Century 21, to expand the solar-energy business in Thailand.

Takamichi Matsuda, chief executive officer of Yokohama Holdings, said his company saw an opportunity in Thailand to get into the solar-rooftop and solar-farm business, as the government has supported a green campaign to reduce unnecessary energy consumption in households and use of alternative energy sources.

Yokohama Holdings has installed solar cells for more than eight years, putting them in more than 1,000 houses in Japan annually.

The company has close business relationships with Toshiba, Hitachi and many other electronics companies, and has ranked in the top 20 in terms of photovoltaic sales for the past two or three years.

As for its operations in Thailand, the company has installed a solar-power system with the capacity of 74 kilowatts at a Toyota showroom in Prachin Buri and is in the process of designing the installation of rooftop solar panels at another Toyota showroom in that province's Kabin Buri district.

In addition, Yokohama Holdings has many future projects in the works with Japanese multinationals operating in Rojana Industrial Park in Ayutthaya province.

Three factories have expressed interest; a feasibility study and work plan for these projects, with the capacity of 1 megawatt per site, are being carried out.

The company also targets winning a 10-per-cent share of the 600MW solar-farm scheme for the government agencies and agricultural cooperatives, licences for which are expected to be issued by the end of this year.

Yokohama Holdings has begun discussions with leading Japanese companies about possible cooperation to construct other alternative-power plants such as waste-to-energy and biomass.

The company also plans to expand to housing projects in the future through cooperation with Century 21.

It aims to list Yokohama Holdings Energy (Thailand) Co on the Stock Exchange of Thailand within three years, Matsuda said.

Yokohama holds 70 per cent of the new joint-venture company and Kittisak the remaining shares. Registered capital will be raised from Bt10 million to Bt100 million late this year.

Kittisak said that although the cooperation was based on his own investment, it reflected that from now on Century 21 (Thailand) was leading the real-estate business towards saving energy by offering alternatives to its trade partners and allies in property sales and marketing.

The company believes that it provides these partners an option to manage their residential projects or buildings efficiently, including hotels, resorts and factories, whose value will gradually increase as a result.

Its customers, who are home owners and users of its services, and the whole country will benefit as the private sector pays more attention to clean energy, which the government is ready to support, he said.

