

## TECHNOLOGY

EA seeks partners  
for satellite slot bid

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Energy Absolute Plc (EA), a renewable energy developer and pioneer in electric vehicle development, plans to hold talks with mu Space and Advanced Technology, a local satellite and space tech firm, to sound out the possibility of forming a partnership to participate in the auction of satellite orbital slots, according to a telecom source.

The move comes as the new board of the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) plans to hold a hearing next month for the draft of the first auction of satellite orbital slot rights.

The auction was scrapped in August last year as SET-listed Thaicom, through its wholly-owned company TC Space Connect, was the only bidder. The planned auction has since been stuck in limbo.

EA chief executive Somphote Ahunai and the heads of mu Space are expected to meet this week for a talk about the possibility of forming a partnership, said the source who requested anonymity.

The talk is coordinated by a former managing director of the Stock Exchange of Thailand, the source said.

"If the talk leads to a partnership, this could resolve a vacuum in the planned auction," the source said.

EA is a leader in the green energy sector, which some view as a cash cow, while mu Space is a satellite and space technology venture led by aerospace engineer James Yenbamroong.

Mu Space is the first space tech mover in Asean. It is making a foray into ground station infrastructure, gateway systems, data centre constellations and digital platforms for space tech in connection with low Earth orbit satellites.

The company also operates a smart factory to develop space tech, which



Mr Somphote is expected to hold talks with mu Space this week.

includes satellites, automation systems and robots.

The source said cooperation between the firms would complement each other, especially mu Space, which would receive a financial boost to develop satellites. EA would benefit from the synergy in terms of battery development, which is a critical part of space tech.

"A partnership may create some concerns for Thaicom, which could possibly face higher bidding prices if Thaicom and the new consortium bid for the same slots," the source said.

Last year, mu Space bought a bid envelope for the auction, but did not submit a bid request by the deadline.

## CRITICAL ORBITAL SLOT

A source close to the NBTC board said some orbital slots granted for Thailand's use are at risk of being cancelled this year if the country fails to coordinate with the International Telecommunication Union, a UN specialised agency

for information and communication technologies, and other countries that hold the rights on other adjacent slots, before the seven-year deadline lapses.

The most critical slot is 119.5 East, where Thaicom 4 satellite is located. Thaicom handed over Thaicom 4 and related assets to the Digital Economy and Society (DES) Ministry after its operating concession ended in September last year.

The DES Ministry assigned National Telecom to manage Thaicom 4.

The satellite's lifespan is set to expire in the next two years and the construction of a new satellite may take three years.

"The NBTC must settle on an auction for the right to use the 119.5 slot by this year to prevent damage that could happen to the country's benefits," said the source close to the board.