

NBTC REDUCES BID PRICES

The NBTC has reduced the starting bid prices for two out of the four satellite orbital slot packages it plans to auction off. **B3**

NBTC lowers orbital slot bid prices

Move complies with amended draft

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The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) has decided to lower the starting bid prices for two out of the four satellite orbital slot packages it plans to auction off later this year, according to its amended auction draft raised during the second hearing of it yesterday.

The NBTC plans to auction off four orbital slot packages. They consist of 50.5°East and 51°E orbital slots, with the second 78.5°E. The third is 119.5°E and 120°E, with the last for 126°E and 142°E.

In the amended draft, the first package's starting bid price dropped from 728.2 million baht in the first draft to 676.9 million. The bid price of the third package decreased from 745.6 million baht to 392.9 million.

The second and the fourth still have their starting bid prices unchanged at 366.5 million and 364.7 million, respectively.

"The reductions of the starting bid prices were made in compliance with actual business operations," said Air Marshal Thanapant Raicharoen, deputy secretary-general of the NBTC.

Licence holders are still subject to an annual fee of 0.25% of revenue

before expense deduction for the right to use orbital slots, up to 1.5% for a telecom operating licence fee and 2.5% for a universal service obligation (USO) fee.

This condition remains unchanged from the first draft.

According to AM Thanapant, the satellite orbital slot auction will be held in two stages.

First, the NBTC will look into bidders' experience and potential to run a satellite business. Second, the regulator will consider their bid prices.

The bid method will change from running through each orbital slot package one-by-one to a simultaneous auction for all four packages, said AM Thanapant.

This approach could help ward off bid rigging and support competition, said AM Thanapant.

The draft amendment was made following the first hearing in December last year. The NBTC approved the amended draft on March 10.

Interested parties can still send their opinions about the auction draft to the NBTC via email, fax and mail until March 30.

"The NBTC office will gather all opinions to improve the draft and will propose it to the NBTC board for consideration late April," said AM Thanapant.

"Once approved, it will be published in the *Royal Gazette* by May."

Interested bidders will be allowed to apply for the auction in June.

According to AM Thanapant, those who pass the qualification checks made



AM Thanapant:
Two-stage auction



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AIR MARSHAL THANAPANT RAICHAROEN

Deputy secretary-general, NBTC

by the NBTC could submit bid prices either late June or early July.

These schedules are to take place before a satellite concession contract held by SET-listed satellite service operator Thaicom expires in September this year.

Meanwhile, the National Innovation Agency (NIA) has unveiled a programme gathering startups, researchers and technology operators to work with allied organisations to usher in products that can be used in the space industry under the project called "Space Economy: Lifting off 2021".

Pun-arj Chairatana, executive director of the NIA, said 10 startups will be selected to work with people with expertise in the space industry.

The space industry is not only concerned with spacecraft deployment but is also interested in leads to various related technologies, such as energy saving and advanced materials, which could be used for other industries, he added.