

NBTC PLAN B

The regulator may look at amending auction conditions to let DTAC maintain 800MHz 2G service past the Sept 15 expiry. **B3**



Narupon Rattanasamaharn (third left), DTAC's regulatory head, submitted a bid application for the 1800MHz licence auction to Mr Takorn on Wednesday.

NBTC may bend for DTAC to keep providing 2G service

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The telecom regulator may look into amending the auction conditions to let Total Access Communication (DTAC) maintain mobile services for 2G customers on the 900-megahertz band after the concession expires on Sept 15.

The amendment will be made if DTAC submits a reasonable proposal to the regulator.

According to a resolution by the board of the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) on July 2, 2G concession holders on the 1800- and 900MHz spectra were required to submit bid applications with a bid guarantee for each of the planned auctions by yesterday to express their intention to continue using spectra after their concessions expire.

Two major mobile operators, Advanced Info Service (AIS) and DTAC, on Wednesday submitted bid applications for the 1800MHz licence auction, while the 900MHz auction was aborted.

DTAC sat out the planned 900MHz auction because the conditions create ambiguous responsibilities for bid winners.

NBTC secretary-general Takorn Tantasith said previously that DTAC must switch off its mobile signal on the 900MHz network after Sept 15 in compliance with the NBTC board's resolution.

But DTAC has said it would be difficult to join the 900MHz auction if the critical conditions that bring operating risk and unpredictable costs were not settled.

"DTAC informally talked about the difficulty and said it will submit an official proposal to the NBTC board to request revi-

sions to the existing resolution," Mr Takorn said, adding that the board will do nothing before Aug 19, the date of the planned 1800MHz licence auction.

Mr Takorn said Section 3 of the existing NBTC remedy measure regulations state that if any concession ends with substantial numbers of users on the network without a timely auction by the NBTC before the expiry, operators are allowed to keep running the service for the remaining users to prevent service disruption.

But Mr Takorn said the planned auctions of the 1800- and 900MHz spectra do not fall under Section 3, because the NBTC has slated the auction timeline for both spectra before the DTAC concession expires on Sept 15.

The NBTC has set the auction's timeline several months before the expiry date of DTAC's concession.

The first round of the 1800MHz auction was aborted after no prospective bidders submitted bid documents by June 15. The NBTC was previously scheduled to auction the 1800MHz licences on Aug 4.

The NBTC board hoped to auction the 900MHz licence on Aug 18 and the 1800MHz licences on Aug 19. But the 900MHz spectrum auction was aborted on Wednesday, the submission deadline.

"DTAC sat out of the 900MHz licence auction, so the company will not have rights under Section 3 of the existing NBTC remedy measure regulations," Mr Takorn said.

DTAC has more than 400,000 users on its 1800MHz and 900MHz networks.