

**DOWN WITH OTT**

The regulator is proposing a levy on OTT operators to an Asean council in hopes of creating a regional framework. **B3**

**TECHNOLOGY**

# NBTC taking OTT tax plan for Asean approval

**KOMSAN TORTERMVASANA**

The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) plans to propose a tax regime to the Asean Telecommunications Regulators Council (ATRC) by this year-end to set a regulatory framework governing over-the-top (OTT) companies.

"We will meet ATRC to discuss a consensus on regulations to govern OTT businesses in Asean, with appropriate state benefits," said NBTC secretary-general Takorn Tantasith.

Apart from a taxation regime, the meeting should see Asean regulators focus on other important OTT issues, including consumer protection, protecting personal data and promoting fair competition among industries, he said.

"We are moving ahead with drafting an OTT regulatory framework, working in line with ATRC," said Mr Takorn.

Speaking at the two-day international symposium on converging technologies and disruptive communications hosted by the NBTC, he said the commission has been concerned with the changes OTT has caused in the telecom and broadcasting industries, which can have further implications on the overall economy.

International and national experts discussed the prevailing conditions and projected developments in the digital ecosystem and are considering regulatory policies and actions that affected broadcasting and telecommunications in an environment of converging technologies and disruptive communications, he said.

According to a report conducted by the Digital Advertising Association, advertising budget allocated to OTTs this year is expected to reach 14 billion baht, which is a 21% increase from 2017. Facebook and YouTube continue to be the top gainers.

In contrast, advertising budget allocated to TV stations have been plummeting since 2015, with total advertising budget via TV stations valued at 2 billion baht.

Referring to these statistics, Mr Takorn said many benefits have been flowing abroad, suggesting that it would be beneficial for the NBTC to host the meeting with ATRC within the last quarter of this year. In addition, the NBTC will set the agenda, with tax regimen as the main issue for Asean countries.

Regarding tax in Thailand, he said the NBTC would cooperate with related agencies to enforce a levy on all OTT operators.