

New draft rules for auction of 900MHz approved

THE NATION

THE BOARD of the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) yesterday approved new draft rules for the 900MHz auction, NBTC secretary-general Takorn Tantasith said.

Some of the main changes from the previous rules included the increase of the starting bid price to over Bt37 billion from the previous price of over Bt35 billion.

Unlike the previous rules, the new draft does not contain a clause requiring the bid winner to be solely responsible for any interference between this 900MHz band and the same band allocated for the future railway projects.

The new auction of the 900MHz licence will be held on October 20. In the event that there is only one participating bidder, the auction date will be extended to take place on November 3.

The NBTC will hold a public hearing on the draft from today until September 24. It will start accepting bid applications during October 3 to 8 with the submission date set for October 8.

The NBTC earlier attempted to auction the 900MHz licence in August but no firms submitted a bid application, prompting the auction to be aborted.

In a related matter, the board yesterday chose not to launch an appeal at this time against the recent Central Administrative Court's order requiring the NBTC to allow DTAC 850MHz customers to continue using the 850MHz service until December 15.

The board reasoned that it still

had until October 15 to launch an appeal if it so chooses.

The board yesterday also approved the issuance of a 1800MHz licence to Advanced Wireless Network (AWN), one of the two bid winners for the licence chosen in August.

Yesterday AWN paid the watchdog its first upfront fee instalment of over Bt6.255 billion, plus VAT of over Bt437.885 million, for the 1800MHz licence. It also handed a bank guarantee of Bt6.693 billion (including VAT) to the watchdog, which is the value of the remaining unpaid upfront fee.

AWN licence

Takorn said that the AWN licence will take effective on September 24.

AWN's parent Advanced Info Service (AIS) has notified the NBTC that the company is ready to receive the 1800 MHz spectrum license on September 24, and will officially launch its 1800MHz service on the combined new and existing 1800MHz bands on September 28.

The AIS chief executive officer, Somchai Lert Sutiwong, said that since 2012, the operator had been acquiring spectrum licences from NBTC's auctions. The cost of all its licenses combined is Bt144 billion.

AWN already controls 30MHz of 1800MHz.

In August it won its second 1800MHz licence totalling 10MHz. Combining these bandwidth means that AWN will operate on a contiguous 40MHz bandwidth of the 1800MHz spectrum.