

TECHNOLOGY

Chula to host 5G testbed centre next year

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The telecom regulator will sign a memorandum of understanding with Chulalongkorn University to jointly establish a 5G testbed centre at the school in early 2019 as part of a drive to catalyse 5G adoption and raise awareness.

The 5G testbed at the university will provide an opportunity for mobile operators and telecom vendors to make trials and demonstrate 5G capability.

The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) has asked Japan's Internal Affairs and Communications Ministry for cooperation with Toyota to demonstrate a smart vehicle on Bangkok roads early next year.

The latest moves are seen as further efforts by the government to promote 5G infrastructure investment after the Digital Economy and Society (DE) Ministry announced an alliance on a 5G testbed to be located in the Eastern Economic Corridor project.

According to NBTC secretary-general Takorn Tantasith, the testbed trials will enable people to get a clearer picture of 5G's benefits.

The NBTC will hold a discussion with Chulalongkorn University management this week, and the memorandum is to be signed by January 2019.

The university will define the exact space for setting up the 5G testbed centre. The two parties will soon hash out the details of joint development, including budget.

In principle, 5G trials and demonstrations at the testbed centre will be done on the 26-28GHz spectrum.

Apart from establishment of the 5G testbed in Bangkok, the NBTC plans to hold an auction for 45MHz of bandwidth on the 700MHz spectrum range in February 2019. The winner would be granted a part of the 35MHz of bandwidth on the 1800MHz range remaining from the previous auction.

The NBTC is trying to rearrange the 700MHz band by transferring digital and analogue TV channels to 470-510MHz instead. Analogue TV channels will be switched off in 2020.

The 700MHz band is to be freed up for wireless broadband to comply with global standards.

Previously, the DE Ministry moved forward with a plan to establish a 5G testbed in Chon Buri province with testing labs and field trials.

The testbed alliance includes the DE Ministry, Huawei Technologies, Ericsson, Qualcomm, Intel and Nokia, as well as local telecom operators and the Thai Federation of ICT Technology Association.

Representatives of the alliance are members of a working committee on the 5G testbed set up on Oct 31. The committee comprises 29 members and is chaired by the DE permanent secretary.

In parallel, mobile operators Advanced Info Service (AIS) and TrueMove H were approved by the NBTC to do their own 5G tests and demos from Nov 22 and Dec 15.

AIS has teamed with global partner Nokia on a 5G demo since Nov 22, using the 26GHz spectrum range.

TrueMove H plans to start its 5G testing at Iconsiam this month by joining forces with Huawei on the 28GHz range.