

**TECHNOLOGY**

# 2600MHz bid planned for 2nd half of 2019

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The telecom regulator plans to auction the 2600MHz band in the second half of 2019 as part of a drive to rearrange unused spectrum for serving fifth-generation (5G) wireless broadband adoption by 2020.

The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) last week appointed a subcommittee, chaired by deputy secretary-general Thanapant Raicharoen, to work on recalling unused spectrum from spectrum holders.

The first priority of the subcommittee is to recall some spectrum bandwidth on the 2600MHz range for the auction, according to NBTC secretary-general Takorn Tantasith.

The 2600MHz spectrum is currently held by state-owned public broadcaster MCOT, which operates 190MHz of bandwidth (for upload and download) under a concession that ends in 2022.

The latest decision is in parallel with the NBTC's efforts to auction 45MHz of bandwidth on the 700MHz band (now used by digital and analogue TV channels) in the third quarter of 2019.

Under the planned 700MHz auction, the NBTC will transfer usage on the 700MHz band to the range between 470MHz and 510MHz. The analogue TV channels will be switched off in 2020.

Mr Takorn said the move to recall the 2600MHz band is in line with the regulatory draft on spectrum recall and compensation published in the *Royal Gazette* on Nov 27.

The regulatory draft follows Section 27 of the amended Frequency Allocation Act (aka the NBTC Law), which went into effect in June and stipulates that the regulator must recall spectrum slots that are inefficiently used by state agencies.

The new law also lets the regulator pay compensation to spectrum holders to facilitate better arrangement of spectrum as a national resource.

Mr Takorn said the subcommittee led by AVM Thanapant was given 30 days to

finish the report on the 2600MHz recall framework, including analysis, amount of spectrum to be recalled from MCOT and a proposal for the spectrum evaluation process.

When details of spectrum bandwidth to be recalled and compensation benchmarks are finalised, they will be submitted to the NBTC board for approval. The NBTC will then propose them to those agencies that hold the spectrum for their consent.

The NBTC, meanwhile, will appoint another subcommittee for negotiating compensation, comprising representatives of state agencies such as the Finance Ministry, the Budget Bureau, the National Economic and Social Development Board and the Digital Economy and Society Ministry.

Mr Takorn said the whole process is expected to take between 180 and 270 days.

"The 2600MHz is the spectrum most suitable for 5G adoption in the near future, and several global vendors have often asked the NBTC about spectrum range reallocation," Mr Takorn said.

Apart from 2600MHz, the NBTC plans to recall several other ranges for future auction: 470MHz, 1500MHz, 3400-3800MHz and 26-28GHz.

The 470MHz range is held by state telecom TOT, which previously returned an unused portion to the NBTC. The commission wants to recall all unused 470MHz range for the spectrum reallocation process.

TOT uses 35MHz of the 1500MHz bandwidth for signal transmission services for rural telephone, while 56MHz is used by Chevron Thailand Exploration and Production and Chevron Offshore Thailand for surveying and petroleum production.

The 3500-3800MHz range is partly used by satellite provider Thaicom. The NBTC is considering a recall of 360MHz of bandwidth on that range.

In addition, the NBTC is mulling a recall of 6GHz of bandwidth on the spectrum range between 26GHz and 28GHz, now partly used by Thaicom.