

STILL ON TRACK

The NBTC says the general election won't affect the planned auction of the 700MHz spectrum for digital TV operators. **B4**

TECHNOLOGY

NBTC assuages auction concerns



The NBTC says the upcoming general election should not affect the remedy measures for digital TV operators.

SEKSAN
ROJJANAMETAKUL

Election not to affect digital TV spectrum

KOMSAN TORTERMVASANA

The procedure and remedy measure for the planned auction of the 700-megahertz spectrum for digital TV operators will not be affected by the upcoming general election, says the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC).

On Jan 15, the NBTC board is set to approve both related regulatory drafts — details of the auction and the spectrum recall and compensation regime.

NBTC secretary-general Takorn Tantasith said the planned auction procedure for 700MHz licences would begin by March after public hearings of the drafts.

The auction date is initially scheduled to be held in May this year.

“Although the general election is expected to be held in February or March, the regulatory drafts

for the auction are scheduled to be approved before the election,” said Mr Takorn after the NBTC board meeting yesterday.

Before the meeting, representatives of the Association of Digital TV Operators met the NBTC chairman to express their concerns over the planned remedy measures for TV operators if the auction is held after the election.

Mr Takorn said the association is urging the NBTC to delay the auction procedure because money from the 700MHz auction is meant to partially subsidise the operating costs of digital TV operators under its long-term survival plan.

The survival plan includes prolonging the subsidy for the terrestrial broadcasting network (MUX rental fee) to 2022 from existing support that will end in 2020, as well as subsidising the operations cost of the must-carry rule until digital TV licences expire.

Digital TV operators are allowed to use 45MHz of bandwidth on the 700MHz spectrum.

The NBTC planned to auction the

700MHz spectrum range this year by dividing 45MHz of bandwidth into nine slots, each slot containing 5MHz of bandwidth (5x2) with a reserve price of 6 billion baht per slot.

Winners of 700MHz licences cannot use the spectrum until 2020, when licence payment also starts, as the range is used by digital TV operators for analogue broadcasts.

The NBTC is in the process of transferring digital TV operators to the range between 470MHz and 510MHz instead. Analogue TV channels will be switched off in 2020.

Mr Takorn said the NBTC board did not approve both related regulatory drafts at the meeting yesterday because the original drafts of auction details and the spectrum recall and compensation regime were combined into a single draft by an NBTC subcommittee.

He said at the Jan 15 meeting the NBTC board needs to consider whether the draft should be separated into two drafts — one each for auction details and spectrum recall and compensation regime.