

700MHz auction up for debate

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THE NATIONAL Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) board will hold an extraordinary meeting on January 15 to discuss the draft rule for auctioning the 700MHz band.

The draft contains two main issues: one, the rules for auctioning a 700MHz band; and the other, the use of the auction proceeds to compensate digital TV broadcasters who will be affected by the NBTC reclaiming the 700MHz band for the auction. The NBTC board meeting will focus on whether these two issues in the draft should be split into two separate drafts.

NBTC secretary-general Takorn Tantasith said yesterday that many board members wanted to separate the issues into two drafts. This is to ensure that if one issue faces any legal opposition, the other issue can still move forward.

The NBTC subcommittee drawing up this draft also proposed in the draft that the watchdog auction 35MHz bandwidth of the 700MHz, which will be divided into seven lots, each containing 5MHz.

The NBTC office will propose to the board that the watchdog auction a total of 45MHz or nine lots, each of 5MHz. Takorn expected the NBTC to invite telecom operators to bid for the 700MHz in April this year and the auction is expected to take place in May.

Takorn added that he personally wanted to see the auction of the 700MHz as a beauty contest, which means the bidders with the best proposals should be awarded the licences. He, however, added that in the view of some board members, some auction details would have to be adjusted.