

TELECOM

NBTC passes recall resolution

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The board of the telecom regulator yesterday passed a resolution to recall 190 megahertz of unused bandwidth on the 2600MHz range to prepare spectrum bandwidth for the upcoming 5G auction.

The unused 190MHz of bandwidth includes 154MHz now held by state-owned broadcaster MCOT and 12MHz held by the Royal Thai Army. The other 24MHz was previously transferred from the Public Relations Department to the telecom regulator.

MCOT and the Royal Thai Army can hold the specified spectrum bandwidth for 45 days after receiving a letter from the regulator, but both agencies must finish removing all related equipment within 120 days.

Takorn Tantasith, secretary-general of National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC), said MCOT and the Army have 30 days to

appeal the resolution if they disagree that it is unused spectrum.

MCOT held the 2600MHz range under a concession that ends in 2022.

The move is in line with Section 27 of the amended NBTC Act that allows the regulator to recall spectrum slots that are inefficient and used by state agencies to reallocate them by auction.

The law also allows the regulator to pay compensation to spectrum holders in order to facilitate a better allocation of spectrum.

Globally, the 2600MHz is an appropriate range for use with 5G technology.

He said the NBTC board also approved a budget of 7.5 million baht for the valuation process of the 2600MHz range. The NBTC plans to hire Chiang Mai University, Chulalongkorn University and Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI) to value the range.

The two universities and TDRI have to evaluate the reserve price of the

2600MHz range and the compensation rate for the agencies that now hold the spectrum.

The NBTC expects the process will finish by July and the auction for 2600MHz licences to be held in September this year.

However, Mr Takorn said it is too early to determine an exact timeline of the licence auction because the process may be delayed if MCOT or the Army disagree with the figure of unused bandwidth they have to return, or the compensation rate.

Once details of spectrum bandwidth to be recalled and compensation benchmarks are concluded by the NBTC's subcommittee, it will be submitted to the board for approval. Then the NBTC will propose to those agencies that hold the spectrum for their consent.

Mr Takorn said agencies can disagree with details and compensation rate, leading to more negotiation.