

TECHNOLOGY

NBTC sets panel to prep 3400MHz bid

Range is seen as coveted for 5G

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The telecom regulator has set up a working panel responsible for preparing the auction process of the 3400-3700-megahertz range, believed to be the most coveted spectrum for 5G adoption among mobile operators.

A source at the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) who requested anonymity said the panel is led by Korkij Danchaivichit, deputy secretary-general of the NBTC in charge of the telecom sector.

The panellists were reported to have held the first meeting last week to discuss the framework of the spectrum recall.

The range is being used by SET-listed satellite service provider Thaicom for its Thaicom 5 C-band satellite.

The source said the NBTC plans to auction off the range as the second batch of 5G spectrum licences, following the first batch put up for auction on Feb 16. A total of 300MHz of bandwidth on the 3400-3700MHz range could be put up for auction.

The NBTC will have to choose three academics to sit on its advisory team studying terms of the spectrum recall, including compensation figures, timeline of the recall process as well as the impact on Thaicom's corporate clients and satellite TV viewers, the source said.

The range is the most coveted for 5G adoption by mobile operators, the source said.

A total of 11 countries in Europe have launched 5G commercial services on the 3500MHz range through a variety of networks and devices provided by vendors.

An executive at a major mobile operator who requested anonymity said the 3500MHz range is the key band for the global 5G development ecosystem.

"It is unavoidable for operators to examine all the 5G adoption opportunities for all the ranges, particularly the 3400-3700MHz," the source said.

According to the source, 300MHz of bandwidth on the range is a suitable amount, compared with only 190MHz of bandwidth on the 2600MHz range, put up for the Feb 16 auction.

Of the four spectra put up for the Feb 16 auction, the 2600MHz is reported to be the most desired among operators.

Several executives at the three major operators agreed if the NBTC sets a clear timeline for the 3400-3700MHz licence auction, they are likely to wait and take part, rather than joining the first batch's bid on Feb 16.

In a related development, Advanced Info Service yesterday picked up bid documents for the multi-band licence auction at the NBTC office. It was the fifth operator to pick them, following True Move H Universal Communication, Total Access Communication, TOT and CAT Telecom. Interested bidders are allowed to pick the bid documents until Feb 3, a day before the deadline to submit bid documents.