

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

NBTC allows Thaicom to rent capacity from foreign firms

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The board of the telecom regulator has passed a resolution allowing SET-listed satellite service provider Thaicom to rent transponder capacity from foreign satellites as part of a move to address technical errors happening with its Thaicom 5 satellites.

The approach is meant to prevent the possible risk of black screens for satellite TV channels that rely on Thaicom 5 satellite's transponders, which could affect millions of household satellite TV subscribers and 157 TV channels.

The latest move came after the Digital Economy and Society (DES) Ministry, which oversees satellite concessions held by Thaicom, wrote to the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) on Jan 7, asking for permission to allow Thaicom to proceed with the plan.

Last month, Thaicom reported to the Stock Exchange of Thailand that the Thaicom 5 satellite experienced a technical incident with the status notification system on Dec 17.



We are evaluating and closely monitoring the satellite system together with our team of experts.

**ANANT
KAEWRUAMGVONGS**
Chief executive, Thaicom

The incident caused technical limitations in monitoring the status of the satellite.

Despite the technical problems, it indicated Thaicom 5 customers were still receiving normal service and other satellite systems were functioning normally.

Takorn Tantasith, secretary-general

of the NBTC, said the board on Wednesday allowed Thaicom to rent foreign satellites' transponders if needed to cope with an emergency.

Four foreign satellites — KTSat 8, Measat 3, Measat 3A and Apstar 7 — could have their transponders rented by Thaicom, limited to a maximum of 5.5 transponder capacity.

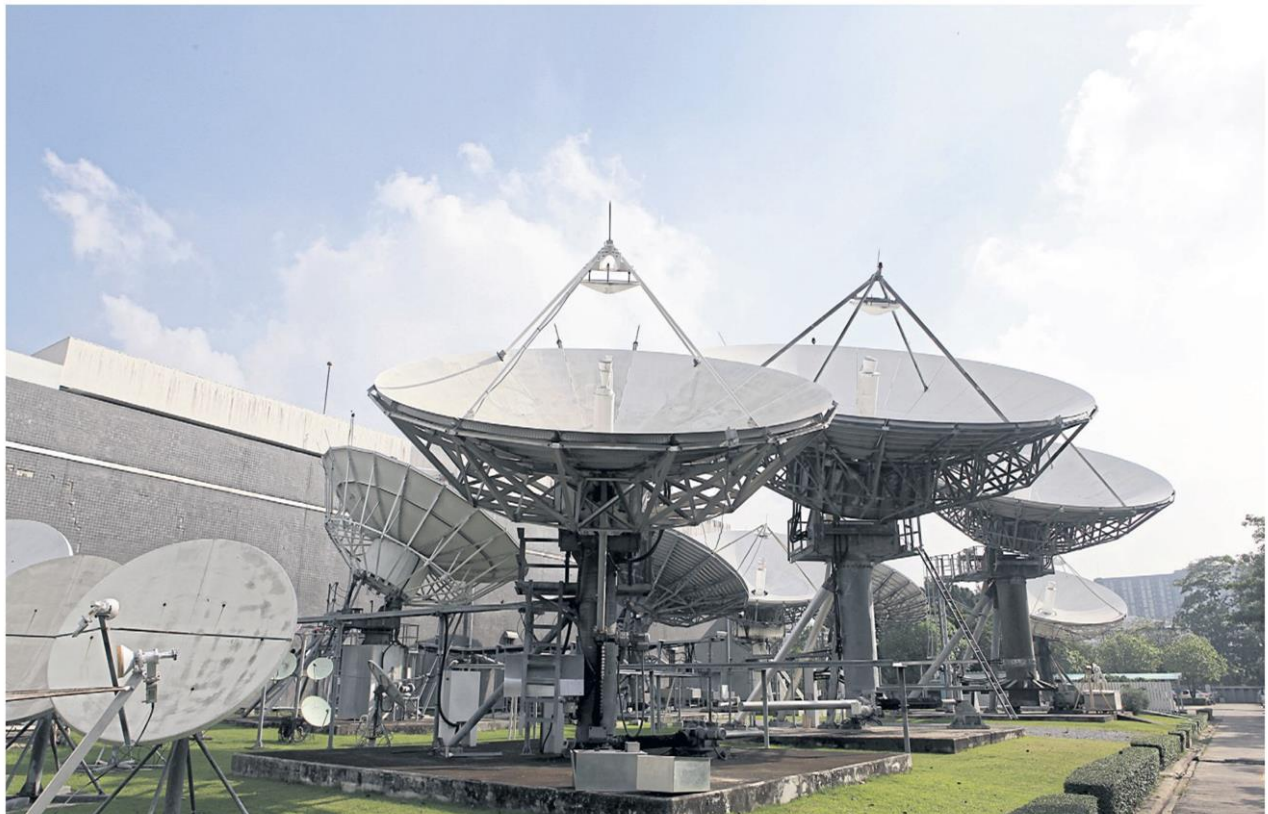
The duration of temporary usage will run until Sept 10 in 2021, when Thaicom's concession expires.

Mr Takorn said the resolution granted to Thaicom does not mean the company can rent foreign satellites' transponders for any other business purposes.

Thaicom chief executive Anant Kae-wruamgvongs said the company is in talks with foreign satellite providers for emergency use.

"We are evaluating and closely monitoring the satellite system together with our team of experts and the satellite manufacturer to find a suitable solution to maintain the satellite in orbit," he said.

Mr Anant said technical incidents



Satellite dishes are positioned behind Thaicom's headquarters in Nonthaburi province. TAWATCHAI KEMGUMNERD

occurred in both the operating system and the backup system of Thaicom 5, which has passed its designed lifespan. The satellite has been operating for 12 years.

"The company is waiting for condition details for the rental of foreign

satellites' transponders from the NBTC before moving ahead with the plan to ensure continuity of services," Mr Takorn said.

In another development, Mr Takorn said the NBTC board will meet on Jan 29 to discuss details of the compensation

for the 2600-megahertz range recall from state-owned broadcaster MCOT.

The range will be put up for auction on Feb 16 for the 5G network.

MCOT holds 160MHz of the range through a concession that will expire in 2020.