



PHOTO: NUTTHAWAT WICHEANBUT

Mr Somchai (right) makes the first instalment payment for 2600MHz spectrum and receives the licence from NBTC secretary-general Takorn Tantasith.

AIS the first operator to launch 5G

KOMSAN TORTERMOVASANA

Advanced Info Service (AIS) has launched 5G ultra-fast internet service on the 2600-megahertz range it acquired from the recent auction, saying thousands of its cell sites are compatible with the frequency band.

AIS, the leading mobile operator by subscribers, plans to spend 10-15 billion baht on 5G network expansion over the next 12 months.

The pledge came yesterday as AIS handed over a cheque for about 2 billion baht to the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) for the first instalment payment for 10 licences on the 2600MHz range it won at the auction.

The company also submitted a bank guarantee of 18.8 billion baht to the regulator.

True Move H Universal Communication (TUC) won nine licences on the 2600MHz range, plus eight licences on the 26-gigahertz range. The second-largest mobile operator said it aims to use the seven frequency bands

it holds for 5G technology.

AIS chief Somchai Lertsutiwong and NBTC chairman Sukit Khamasunthorn launched the 5G network at the NBTC office, along with a display of AIS's 5G network capacity via a speed test, 4K video streaming and video calls from five major cities in the country.

"AIS opened a new chapter in the industry as the first operator to launch a 5G network in the country on the

2600MHz range," Mr Somchai said.

Although AIS has thousands of cell sites compatible with the 2600MHz range for 5G services, full 5G adoption requires collaboration from all related parties for ecosystem development, he said.

"Real optimum benefits from 5G can be expected within one or two years," Mr Somchai said. "AIS invites vertical industries to collaborate to shape up the ecosystem and use cases."

AIS chief consumer business officer Pratthana Leelapanang said the 16 million customers using AIS's 4G service who have smartphones compatible with the 2600MHz range can immediately benefit from the service with 400% increased speed on mobile internet.

Samsung's S20 Ultra 5G device, available from March 6, can be used with AIS's 5G service and is now open for booking through various channels, including AIS shops, Mr Pratthana said.

He said promotional packages for AIS's 5G service could be introduced by April.