

**TELECOMS**

# Issues facing NT chief highlighted

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Digital Economy and Society (DES) Minister Chalwut Thanakamansorn has outlined three critical agenda items the new president of National Telecom (NT) needs to pursue to move the state telecom enterprise forward amid difficult challenges this year.

The NT board recently chose Col Sanphachai Huvananandana, former president of CAT Telecom, as its first president. He will assume the leadership role at NT on Aug 1.

Col Sanphachai was previously the board director of NT before resigning from the post late last year.

He is set to replace Gp Capt Somsak Khaosuwan, who served as the acting president of NT since the company was established through the merger of CAT Telecom and TOT in January 2021.

Mr Chalwut said the first priority the NT president needs to follow through on is to ensure management restructuring to level up the company's business capability.

At present, NT has 20 senior executive vice-presidents and 39 executive vice-presidents, who were drawn from both CAT Telecom and TOT.

Labour unions of both CAT Telecom

and TOT had requested the government maintain these positions in NT before the two organisations merged.

However, industry observers believe this creates a bulky structure for NT, making it uncompetitive in the telecom and digital business.

Mr Chalwut said it may be difficult for NT to ensure seamless management procedures in the initial phase of the merger but once the new president takes office, it would be the proper time to restructure NT.

Regarding the second item, NT has the obligation to deliver the government's policies and projects, especially a move to bring overhead telecom and broadcast cables underground as well as satellite business.

A joint committee of four parties has been set up to move overhead cables underground.

They cover NT, the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission, the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration and its construction and investment arm Krungthep Thanakom.

NT is now perceived to be in pole position to provide its underground cable conduits to serve the project as it already has conduits spanning 3,000 kilometres in Bangkok.

It is also in charge of the operation of Thaicom 4 and 6 satellites, which were handed over by SET-listed satellite service operator Thaicom after its concession expired in September last year.

NT has hired a group of Thaicom engineers to handle these satellites under personal contracts.

Regarding the final item, NT should come up with a clear business direction for the 700-megahertz spectrum range, according to Mr Chalwut.