

END OF THE LINE

The NBTC is mulling forcing mobile subscribers with more than 10 SIM cards to re-register at service centres. **B4**

NBTC to cap SIM holding

Move aims to block 'mule' bank accounts

KOMSAN TORTERMVASANA

The telecom regulator is considering forcing mobile subscribers who own more than 10 active SIM cards to re-register at mobile operators' service centres as part of an effort to combat online and phone scams.

The move is meant to obstruct offenders who use "mule" bank accounts to commit illegal transactions through mobile banking apps.

Sutisak Tantayotin, deputy secretary-general of the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC), said the agency is looking into the possibility of capping the number of SIM cards owned by a mobile subscriber.

"It may start at 10 or 30 SIM cards and this will be an obligation under an upcoming regulation," said Mr Sutisak.

The latest approach came after a recent meeting of related agencies aimed at combating online crimes, comprising the Digital Economy and Society (DES) Ministry, the NBTC, the Royal Thai Police, the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Bank of Thailand, the Thai Bankers' Association and mobile operators.

"The re-registration is expected to help reduce fraudulent activities via mobile platforms," he said.

Mr Sutisak said the NBTC has been aware of small mobile vendors allowing people to subscribe for many SIM cards, which later change hands to others.

The new regulation to deal with



Mobile SIM cards on display at the NBTC office. Mr Sutisak said the NBTC is aware of small mobile shop vendors allowing people to subscribe for many SIM cards, which later change hands.

the issue is expected to come up this month, he said.

DES Minister Chaiwit Thanakamansorn said any proposed resolutions to counter fraudulent online activities will be proposed to the cabinet for acknowledgement before they can be enforced.

The government is paying serious attention to combating online and call scams, he said.

From March to the present, some 110,000 cases involved with online and call scams were reported to the government's complaint centre, he said. They caused 10 billion baht in damage.

Mule bank accounts have been used on mobile banking platforms to support illegal transactions and efforts must be made to prevent the use of these accounts, especially through prepaid SIM cards that can support online financial transactions.

"If we can block the mule accounts or create barriers for them, this will reduce the problem," said Mr Chaiwit.

The DES Ministry will coordinate efforts to amend the Anti-Money Lau-

ndering Act to facilitate the prosecution of those who open mule bank accounts, he added.

In July, the NBTC approved a resolution to fine mobile carriers 1 million baht a day if they are found to allow an individual to register more than five SIM cards through dealers.

If an individual wants to register more than five SIM cards, they need to contact the carriers' service centres. The move is meant to prevent scammers from using many SIM cards to deceive members of the public.

An NBTC survey in June discovered that many small dealers allow an individual to register more than five SIM cards.