

TELECOM

NBTC to allocate 100MHz free to factories for 5G networks

KOMSAN TORTERMVASANA

The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) plans to allocate 100 megahertz of bandwidth on the 4800MHz band free of charge to factories to help develop their 5G private networks.

The 4800MHz band will be allocated for non-profit use with conditions to drive vertical industries to develop their 5G private networks for operations, said NBTC commissioner Somphop Purivigraipong, who is responsible for the telecom sector.

He said in principle, the NBTC plans to allocate the 4800MHz band mainly to enterprises, factories and industrial estate operators that ask for the spectrum, regardless of whether they will collaborate with equipment vendors or telecom operators to deploy the spectrum to operate their 5G private networks.

Participating factories must utilise the band to improve their operations and enhance capabilities, said Mr Somphop.

They cannot use the band for com-

mercial purposes for outsiders, he said.

Mr Somphop said some businesses might want to be private network operators (PNOs). These firms will be directly awarded the right from the NBTC to use the 4800MHz band to offer services and related solutions to factories and industrial estates, he said.

PNOs may be required to bid for the right to use the band to serve their factory customers, said Mr Somphop.

Major telecom operators can join these auctions if they want to be PNOs in this category, he said.

However, if major mobile operators are awarded 4800MHz licences for 5G private networks, they will be prohibited from providing mobile phone service to the mass market, said Mr Somphop.

They will also be prohibited from roaming the band with their existing 2600MHz mass market service as it does not align with the NBTC's objective of promoting 5G private networks, he said.

"The purpose of the 4800MHz allocation is mainly for factories and enterprises requesting the spectrum for their operations. Factories can collaborate

with equipment vendors or telecom companies to deploy solutions for 5G private network operations," said Mr Somphop.

Current 5G usage in the mass market does not fully utilise 5G capabilities as most consumer use consists of video streaming and complementing 4G service, he said.

Few factories have adopted 5G solutions on telecom operators' 2600MHz band as there are limited real use cases for them, said Mr Somphop.

"Allocation of the 4800MHz band should promote real use cases for 5G private network adoption nationwide," he said.

The NBTC previously considered allocating a portion of the 3500MHz band for 5G private network promotion. However, there are some technical problems in allocating 3500MHz, which is the most popular band globally for 5G adoption.

A source on the NBTC board who requested anonymity said up to 700MHz of bandwidth on the 3500MHz spectrum could be allocated.

The NBTC initially planned to auction 100MHz of bandwidth on the 3500MHz band by the end of 2027.

However, the Association of Digital TV Broadcasting urged the NBTC to reconsider its plan to auction the 3500-3800MHz spectrum for telecom service as many satellite TV stations now use the range to air their programmes.



The regulator says it wants enterprises to develop 5G private networks for operations.