

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Details finalised for 900MHz auction

KOMSAN TORTERMOVASANA

The board of the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) approved the amended conditions and timeline yesterday for the second-round auction of 900-megahertz licences scheduled for Oct 20.

The move came after the NBTC finished a hearing process for the amended draft via its website between Sept 20 and 24.

Takorn Tantasith, secretary-general of the NBTC, said the second-round auction of the 900MHz draft is expected to be announced in the *Royal Gazette* this Friday. The regulator will allow all interested companies to pick up bid documents between Oct 1 and 8.

All prospective bidders must submit the bid documents and a bank guarantee by Oct 9, one day ahead of the original date set last week.

Mr Takorn said only two of the major operators gave comments about the amended draft of the upcoming auction on the NBTC's website — Advanced Wireless Network (AWN), a subsidiary of Advanced Info Service, and Total Access Communication (DTAC).

DTAC commented that the company needed to see longer terms for licence payment instalments, from four to 15 terms.

However, the NBTC board insisted on keeping the licence payment terms at

four increments.

He said the NBTC amended two critical conditions from the original draft of the 900MHz auction to create more attractive conditions for prospective bidders, especially DTAC.

First, the regulator removed the original condition that licence winners must be solely responsible for any and all interference with upcoming railway projects, both on the 850- and 900MHz spectra.

Second, the NBTC added some details to the auction conditions to clarify that if DTAC joins the bid, it could operate the concession spectrum on 850MHz for another 24 months during the transition from the 850MHz to 900MHz network because of hardware upgrades across several thousands of sites nationwide.

However, the NBTC board maintained the term of the 900MHz licence payments at four increments: 4.02 billion baht within 90 days after the auction; 2 billion in the second year; another 2 billion in the third year; and the rest in the fourth year.

DTAC operated mobile service on the 1800- and 850MHz spectra under a concession from CAT Telecom that expired on Sept 15.

The NBTC planned to auction the first round of the 900MHz licence by upgrading DTAC from 850MHz to the 900MHz range. However, no bidder joined the auction.