

Officials banking on 5G bids

Panel will coordinate network adoption

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The government is hoping that proceeds from the 5G spectrum auctions and network investment will drive the country's economic and investment activity, working as an engine to reverse slowing GDP growth.

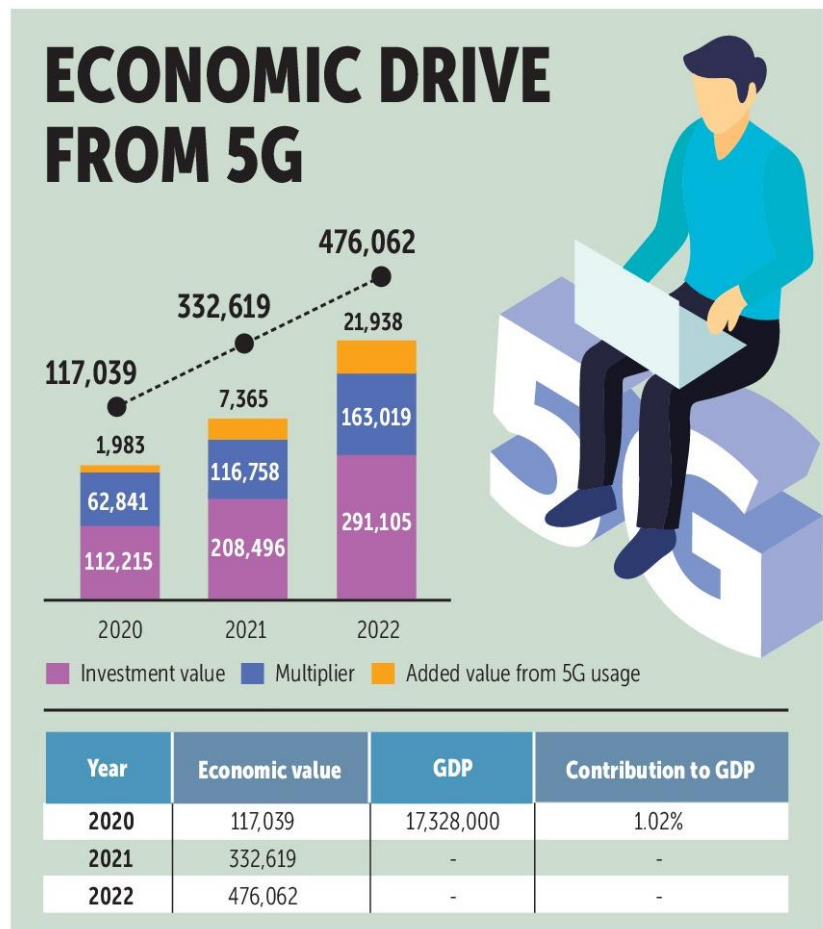
Officials also aim to set up the National 5G Committee by the end of this month to coordinate efforts to drive 5G adoption.

The panel is expected to ensure that the 5G roll-out provides optimum benefits for the overall economy and eases telecom operators' process of importing and installing equipment for 5G networks.

"The government's concern is how and when 5G tech adoption will take place," Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwon said during a visit yesterday to the office of the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC). "We want it to add value and benefits to people and business."

He was at the NBTC to hold talks with board members and secretary-general Takorn Tantasith about the 5G push for the country's development. Also in attendance was Digital Economy and Society (DES) Minister Buddhipongse Punnakanta.

Gen Prawit said the government attaches importance to 5G adoption,



Source: NBTC forecast

Unit: million baht

BKPGraphics

with all state agencies standing ready to help private operators and the telecom regulator proceed with development.

5G adoption is expected to help reduce the digital divide and income disparity and push for digital

transformation among vertical industries, he said.

"The innovative tech must help provide new business opportunities for people, such as startups, and transform traditional businesses into new

development paths, such as smart farming, smart cities, smart health and industries driven by artificial intelligence and robotics," Gen Prawit said.

NBTC secretary-general Takorn Tantasith said the National 5G Committee would not interfere with the management or decision-making by the NBTC. The panel is to serve as a centre for cooperation of related agencies, strategic plans and ecosystem support for 5G development.

Mr Takorn said the five mobile operators notified the NBTC that they are ready to take up any licences they may win in the Feb 16 auction within one week of the announcement of the winners.

"They want to receive the licences as soon as possible to proceed with the equipment import and installation to compete with rivals," he said.

Meanwhile, Mr Takorn said the 700MHz and 2600MHz ranges will be fiercely contested by bidders in this month's 5G spectrum auction, as the available licences on the spectra fall short of their demand.

Leading mobile operator Advanced Info Service (AIS), True Move H Universal Communication and CAT Telecom are all competing for the two spectrum ranges, according to an industry source.

The NBTC board, meanwhile, plans to approve incentives for 5G adoption this month, including enabling operators to import 5G-related equipment from March 1 and letting them install related devices on the existing 130,000 base stations with no need for a public hearing.