

TELECOMS

Draft to shift spare slots to 5G gets nod

KOMSAN TOR TERMVASANA

The telecom regulator yesterday officially approved the regulatory draft for reframing unused or non-optimum-usage spectrum ranges to be auctioned for 5G wireless broadband.

The move is also in line with the NBTC Act, which was put into effect last year, that allows the regulator to compensate spectrum holders before concessions expire in exchange for returning the spectrum.

Takorn Tantasith, secretary-general of the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC), said the spectrum ranges that are being considered to be recalled for auction include the 2600 megahertz, 3500-3800 MHz and 26-28 gigahertz.

State-owned public broadcaster MCOT holds a total of 380MHz of uplink-downlink bandwidth on the 2600MHz band.

MCOT agreed to return the unused 180MHz of bandwidth to the NBTC for auction.

The 3500-3800MHz ranges are partially used by satellite business provider Thaicom.

The NBTC is considering recalling a combined 360MHz of bandwidth on the 3500-3800MHz.

The NBTC is also considering recalling 6GHz of bandwidth on the 26-28GHz range, which Thaicom is operating on.

Mr Takorn said the NBTC will outline all details for the regulatory draft and carry out the public hearing process before the NBTC board approves it. The regulatory draft will be put into effect by November 2018.

The three categories of spectrum ranges that will be recalled are: unused spectrum ranges; partly used spectrum ranges; and spectrum that are not being used optimally.

Mr Takorn said before the spectrum ranges are recalled, the NBTC needs to carry out an analysis of spectrum ranges

that comprise important details of the recall process, including the quantity of spectrum bandwidth to be recalled, affected parties, timeline of return, and benefits to the public.

The analysis needs to be approved by the NBTC board before the spectrum is recalled, and the NBTC will send letters to agencies or enterprises that hold spectrum.

The spectrum holders must reply within 90 days after receiving the letter. They can refuse to return the unused spectrum to the NBTC, but they must respond with their reasons.

For compensation, Mr Takorn said the NBTC will hire at least three educational or state research institutes to take part in evaluating. A compensation committee panel will comprise representatives of seven state agencies including Finance Ministry, the Budget Bureau, the National Economic and Social Development Board, Ministry

of Digital Economy and Society, Council of the State.

He said the NBTC will auction 90MHz of downlink-uplink bandwidth on the 700MHz spectrum by 2020, which is being used by digital TV channels.

The 700MHz spectrum for digital TV will be switched off in 2020 and be used for telecom services, in line with standards of the International Telecommunication Union and the World Radiocommunication Conferences in 2015 that officially endorsed Thailand's position to auction the 700MHz band for mobile communications.

The government has made 5G part of the national agenda to transform the domestic economy from an industrial one to an innovative one as well as creating value to vertical industries under Thailand 4.0.

Mr Takorn said each mobile operator has to hold at least 200MHz of bandwidth under a variety of spectrum ranges to ensure competitiveness after 2020.

Previously, the NBTC floated the idea to auction lower bands such as the 700- and 2600MHz spectra, with the winners being awarded slots on high bands such as 3.5-, 26- or 28GHz ranges without additional payment.



Takorn: Analysis to be carried out first

SPECTRA CONSIDERED FOR RECALLING

Range	quantity of bandwidth	Now used by
2600MHz	180 MHz	MCOT
3500-3800MHz	360 MHz	partly Thaicom
26-28GHz	6 GHz	partly Thaicom

Source: Compiled by Bangkok Post

BANGKOK POST GRAPHICS