

SWEETER DEALOfficials are ramping up efforts to draw mobile operators into the 5G spectrum auction with the promise of fresh perks. **B3****TECHNOLOGY**

State offering 5G bid perks



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SOMKID JATUSRIPITAK

Deputy prime minister

Higher loan limits for ailing operators

SUCHIT LEESA-NGUANSUK

The government is gearing up efforts to draw mobile operators into the 5G spectrum auction scheduled for next month with a push to expand the ceiling loan limits for operators and a promise to finance state agencies to spur 5G use cases.

The plan was spelled out as Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak visited the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) yesterday to hold a meeting on the country's economic drive through 5G technology.

The event was joined by the NBTC board, representatives from five mobile and telecom operators and Digital Economy and Society Minister Budhipongse Punnakanta.

Speaking after the meeting, NBTC secretary-general Takorn Tantasith said the Bank of Thailand would be asked by the government to work with financial institutions to push up the ceiling loan limits for some operators who may be struggling.

Mr Takorn said the government cannot provide subsidies for the

operators directly, as this would run counter to the law.

The government will inform the Finance Ministry, which receives auction money from the NBTC, to allocate the sum to state agencies, including those connected with public health, industry and transport, so they can invest in 5G use cases.

The approach could generate as much as 10 billion baht for the economy in terms of 5G tech use instead of the earlier forecast of 1.9 billion baht throughout this year, Mr Takorn said.

5G licence holders will be allowed to join the national 5G committee so they can work with at least 10 state agencies on the 5G use case drive, including fields like smart factories and smart hospitals.

"5G will be an engine that directly drives growth and transforms key sectors to increase their productivity and efficiency and enables them to roll out new revenue-seeking models," Mr Somkid said.

Thailand, the deputy prime minister said, cannot afford to delay the 5G roll-out, as the ultra-fast internet network will be conducive to foreign direct investment, particularly in the Eastern Economic Corridor.

Somchai Lertsutiwong, chief executive of Advanced Info Service, said mobile operators remain concerned about steep prices for 5G spectrum licences after the auction.