

A NEW ENTRANTNational Telecom was instructed to participate in the bidding for satellite orbital slots as part of the country's space policy. **B2****TECHNOLOGY**

NT assigned to take part in satellite bid



The headquarters of state enterprise National Telecom.

KOMSAN TORTERMVASANA

National Telecom (NT), a state enterprise, has been assigned to participate in the December auction of satellite orbital slot packages to operate satellite services as part of the national space policy, says Digital Economy and Society Minister Chaiwut Thanakamanusorn.

He said the 119.5° East orbital slot is NT's top priority as it needs to be reserved for the new satellite scheduled to replace the Thaicom 4 satellite, which has an engineering lifespan that expires at the end of 2023.

The participation of NT in the auction is in line with a recent resolution by the National Digital Economy and Society Committee (NDESC), which wants the company to operate the satellite service for the public interest, said Mr Chaiwut.

If NT fails to land the rights to the satellite orbital slot in the auction, it may hold talks with the winning bidder to seek some parts of its satellite capacity for usage, or pursue joint investment, he said.



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CHAIWUT THANAKAMANUSORN
Digital Economy and Society Minister

"An action plan is being created, including an exact budget figure for NT to join the bidding," said Mr Chaiwut.

According to a study by NDESC, the government needs 1 gigabyte or 2% of a satellite transponder capacity to be used to serve the public interest, including disaster management, natural security and resource protection.

Last year's auction, scheduled for Aug 28, was scrapped as Thaicom's wholly owned company TC Space Connect was the sole bidder.

The December auction offers five slot packages instead of four placed last year. They consist of 50.5°E and 51°E; 78.5°E; 119.5°E and 120°E; 126°E; and 142°E.

The combined reserve price of the five packages is 1.841 billion baht if each package has one bidder, compared with 1.8 billion in last year's auction.

If each package has more than one bidder, the combined reserve price is 1.329 billion baht.

The draft conditions of the auction also stipulate the winner of each orbital slot is obligated to reserve 1% of each slot capacity for state use.

The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission last month held a public hearing on the draft conditions.

Several participants opposed the proposed reserve prices, saying they are high compared with the business environment and global trends.

They also disagreed with the obligation that the winner of each orbital slot has to reserve 1% of each slot capacity to be used by the state, saying the winners should provide consent for that requirement.