

NBTC scopes timeframe for auction

MID OR LATE 2019 IN
FRAME FOR SALE OF
700MHZ BAND, WITH
PROCEEDS TO EASE
BURDEN ON DIGITAL
TV BROADCASTERS

SIRIVISH TOOMGUM
THE NATION

THE auction of the 700MHz band is expected to take place in the middle of next year or late that year, according to the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) subpanel tasked with recalling the 700MHz band.

The recall of this band is part of the NBTC's measures to help ease the financial burden on digital TV broadcasters.

The subpanel will recall the band from the digital TV broadcasting licence holders before putting it in the auction for the provision of proposed 5G telecommunications services.

The proceeds from the auction will be passed to the NBTC's broadcasting and telecom research and development fund for the public benefit (BTFP), which will spend part of the proceeds to compensate the broadcasters for their return of the 700MHz band to the watchdog.

Subpanel chairman Natee Sukonrat said yesterday that the subpanel has considered enabling

the auction proceeds to be used to cover the broadcasters' remaining unpaid licence upfront fees of around Bt12 billion.

The proceeds will also be used to cover the broadcasters' "Must Carry" cost, which is their expense of transmitting programmes through a satellite network. This amount will cover such costs until the end of the remaining 10 years for which their licences are valid.

The subpanel also intends to use part of the proceeds to cover their broadcasting network rental cost until the end of their licence period.

Finalised rules

The subpanel is expected to finalise the rules for the recall of the 700MHz and the compensation details early next year, when they would be put to the NBTC board for its consideration, Natee added.

The subpanel called the meeting with the broadcasters, broadcasting network providers and telecom operators on the issues for the first time yesterday.

The broadcasters proposed to the subpanel that the NBTC use the BTFP fund to compensate them after recalling the 700MHz.

The move to recall the 700MHz complies with the second edition of the NBTC law. It also supports the NBTC's plan for next year to seek ways to help the ailing digital TV licence holders and promote the planned 5G service.

The watchdog will switch the broadcasters over to the 470MHz band instead.