

TECHNOLOGY

The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission office on Phahon Yothin Soi 8. TAWATCHAI KEMGUMNERD

Cabinet OKs recruiting of new NBTC board members

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The cabinet yesterday approved the Digital Economy and Society (DES) Ministry's request to trigger the process of recruiting new board members of the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission under the existing NBTC Act.

The move is meant to ward off a decision-making vacuum as the existing board faces key issues.

The NBTC board has six members. Their working term ended in October 2017, but the previous military regime invoked Section 44 to let them work until their replacement by new recruits.

DES Minister Buddhipongse Punnakanta said that after cabinet approval the secretariat office of the cabinet will

send the official resolution to the NBTC office, which has to forward it to the secretariat office of the Senate to start the recruitment procedure.

"The recruitment procedure is expected to be completed in the next three months," Mr Buddhipongse said.

Under the existing NBTC Act, which came into force in 2017, 14 shortlisted candidates from seven fields of expertise must be sought first, two from each field. The fields include telecom, broadcasting, law and consumer protection.

Of the 14, seven will be chosen by Senate vote, leaving one candidate per field.

Meanwhile, the recruitment-related amendment to the act is still under a House committee's consideration. The amendment bill will also have to be

passed by the Senate before being sent to parliament for a re-vote.

Under the amendment bill, the selection of seven board members will be done only one time through a Senate vote, which would shorten the recruitment process.

Mr Buddhipongse supports a transitional provision in the bill that allows the new NBTC board members selected under the existing act to apply for recruitment again when the bill comes into effect.

"Personally, I have no idea how long the new NBTC board members selected under the upcoming recruitment will be able to work," he said. "But it would be practical if they are allowed to apply for the position again under the amendment bill."

In April 2018, the National Legislative Assembly (NLA) under the military-led government turned down the entire list of 14 candidates for the NBTC board.

The NLA committee vetting the list said it found that more than half the candidates were involved in business regulated by the NBTC over the past year.

An industry source said several well-known industry veterans are interested in applying to become NBTC board members, including Thailand Post president Korkij Danchaivichit.

Mr Korkij resigned as deputy secretary-general of the NBTC earlier this year and was appointed Thailand Post president on March 1.

He was among the 14 candidates who were turned down by the NLA in 2018.