

TELECOM

NBTC preps rights for satellite slots

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The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) targets allocating the rights to use unsold satellite orbit slots by March 2024, three months later than originally planned.

The package of the 50.5° East and 51°E orbital slots, together with the 142°E slot, remain unsold. They are two of the five packages the NBTC auctioned off in January.

NBTC commissioner AM Thanapant Raicharoen said the allocation process for the three unsold slots should occur by March 2024.

The NBTC is planning optional methods of granting rights other than an auction.

AM Thanapant said seeking alternative licensing methods follows the NBTC board's approval in principle on Sept 21 of the draft of a second master plan for the NBTC management of the rights to use the orbital slots.

The regulator is holding a public hearing of the draft until Nov 10. The first master plan took effect in February 2020.

He said the new master plan is expected to be published in the *Royal Gazette* by the end of this year, facilitating the allocation of the orbital slot rights.

On Jan 15, the NBTC held the

country's first auction of satellite orbital slot rights with five packages: 50.5°E and 51°E with a starting price of 374 million baht; 78.5°E with a reserve price of 360 million baht; 119.5°E and 120°E with a reserve price of 397 million baht; 126°E with a reserve price of 8.6 million baht; and 142°E with a reserve price of 189 million baht.

Space Tech Innovation, an affiliate of SET-listed Thaicom, won the second package for 380 million baht and the third package for 417 million baht.

State agency National Telecom won the fourth package for 9.07 million baht.

AM Thanapant said the NBTC must strike a balance between maintaining the rights to access satellite orbits as provided by the constitution, and rights acquisition by entrepreneurs who will use them to benefit the country.

The NBTC office is also drafting related details of the new principles for the allocation of orbital slot rights, in line with the draft of the second master plan.

The draft of the new principles is expected to be completed for the hearing process by the end of this year.

The draft details alternative models for awarding licences for orbital slots, such as beauty contests, a revenue-sharing basis or direct awarding, he said.

"It is too early to choose the new method for awarding the licences," AM Thanapant said.

The beauty contest method focuses on the readiness and qualifications of prospective bidders based on their proposals, as well as the proposed benefits to the state, he said.

Interested companies may only need to pay the reserve price of the targeted slots as a minimum payment to the state, said AM Thanapant.

The revenue-sharing approach would determine the exact rate of benefits that licence holders would have to share with the state, while direct awarding determines specific conditions for awarding licences to specific companies.



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AM THANAPANT RAICHAROEN
Commissioner, NBTC