

1800MHz slot barrier averted

KOMSAN TORTERMOVASANA

The telecom regulator has set a clear resolution of rights for the 1800-megahertz slot reshuffle to ensure that winner of the auction will not intentionally create a technical barrier for existing operators on the 1800MHz band.

The existing condition of the 1800MHz auction allows the winning bidder the right to choose first whatever slot it needs to grab, followed by the second- and third-highest winning bidders.

According to the additional details of the auction rule, the winning bidder will be banned from selecting some slots that would create a technical spectrum barrier for operators that are operating services on adjacent spectrum slots.

But the protection only applies to existing operators if they also join the planned 1800MHz auction on Aug 19.

The additional condition was approved by the National Broadcasting

and Telecommunications Commission's (NBTC) board yesterday.

Takorn Tantasith, secretary-general of the NBTC, said the additional condition complements the existing auction conditions for the 1800MHz spectrum.

More importantly, it will raise the winning price if bidders compete for specific slots, he said.

True Move operate on the 1800-MHz range between 1720-1725MHz for upload and 1805-1820MHz for download, while Advanced Info Service (AIS) operates on 1725-1740MHz for upload and 1820-1835MHz for download. The two operators won 1800MHz licences each in the 2015 auction.

Mr Takorn said AIS and Total Access Communication (DTAC), for example, have opted to bid on Aug 19 and DTAC won the slot with the highest winning price for the entire auction, while AIS won another slot with the second-highest winning price. DTAC, therefore, will not be

able to grab the slot adjacent to the one AIS won in the 2015 auction.

DTAC provides service on 90MHz of bandwidth of 1800MHz under a 2G concession with CAT Telecom. The concession will expire in September.

The NBTC is set to auction the 1800MHz spectrum held by DTAC into nine slots of 10MHz (upload and download) each and cap the maximum licence per bidder at four slots. Each slot on the 1800MHz spectrum will have a reserve price of 12.48 billion baht, based on the winning price of the previous auction of 1800MHz in 2015.

Both AIS and DTAC picked up bid documents for the 1800MHz auction on July 16. The NBTC is allowing interested companies to pick up the bid documents until Aug 7.

The auction for the 1800MHz spectrum will be the first where the NBTC allows the winner of the 1800MHz licence to negotiate slot reshuffles with other operators.