

NBTC works to hammer out five-tiered IoT framework

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The telecom regulator is crafting a regulatory framework for the Internet of Things (IoT) and the connectivity of related devices in five critical categories, to be introduced by the end of this year.

The move is aimed at preparing for the regulation and promoting increased use of machine-to-machine connectivity — especially after 2020, when fifth-generation (5G) wireless broadband is scheduled for commercial launch.

The five categories are: numbering and identification; spectrum and technical standards; permission related to radio communications and competition; security and privacy; and data arrangement structure and data interoperability.

Korkij Danchaivichit, deputy secretary-general of the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission, said the NBTC on April 4 set up a committee to draft the regulatory framework for IoT and connected devices.

Chaired by NBTC secretary-general Takorn Tantasith, the committee comprises 19 members, including

representatives of the Digital Economy and Society Ministry and telecom operators through the Telecommunications Association of Thailand.

The NBTC last month appointed five subcommittee members working with related parties to create proper regulatory conditions for IoT business.

Mr Korkij was appointed as a major adviser for each subcommittee, while the number of members for each subcommittee varies.

The subcommittees have been tasked with handling those five categories.

The initial regulatory draft for IoT is targeted to be completed by year-end.

Mr Korkij gave one example for the regulatory framework, saying numbering usage for IoT connectivity would be run through a 15-digit system, in compliance with current practical standards of the International Telecommunication Union.

Mr Korkij said customer data should be clearly defined, with general data that can be utilised for public benefit segregated from personal data that should be protected.

The NBTC's subcommittee is working

in parallel to develop the existing data protection draft bill that will later be submitted to the National Legislative Assembly for consideration.

Mr Korkij said the NBTC wants to see a more uniform customer data arrangement structure among telecom operators to simplify matters.

"Each operator today has their own arrangement system for their customer's data storage," he said. "The issue will be more complex once the number of connected devices explodes in future."

Mr Korkij said the NBTC has approved 920-925 megahertz of unlicensed spectrum for IoT connectivity since last year.

The move aims to initiate spectrum standards for machine-to-machine connectivity. Interested companies had previously asked for permission under the NBTC's telecom licence type three regime to provide IoT devices and services in the market prior to the introduction of regulations for the overall IoT ecosystem.

The 920-925MHz frequency range is part of the ISM (industrial, scientific and medical radio range), which is specified to be shared among various applications.