

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

NBTC schedules satellite orbital bid for December

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The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) plans to hold the country's first auction of satellite orbital slot rights in December, with conditions tweaked from the proceeding one that was scrapped last year to attract more bidders.

The NBTC decided to scrap the auction slated for Aug 28, 2021 as SET-listed Thaicom, through its wholly owned company TC Space Connect, was the only bidder. The bidding has since been stuck in limbo.

According to the NBTC, the December auction will come with two-tier reserve prices with the higher price to be set if there is only one bidder. The auction will see five slot packages instead of four placed last year while qualifications vary according to the packages.

The move was spelled out yesterday at a news briefing by the five new commissioners, who took office three months ago.

Air Marshal Thanapant Raicharoen said the management has amended the auction conditions and the draft of it will be submitted to the NBTC board for consideration on Aug 3.

The December auction will include five satellite orbital slot packages — 50.5° East and 51°E orbital slots; 78.5°E; 119.5°E and 120°E; 126°E; and 142°E.

Last year's auction saw only four packages with 126°E and 142°E put together in the same package.

Referring to the two-tier reserve prices, AM Thanapant said the higher reserve price is about 30% higher than the other. If there is only one bidder, the higher reserve price would be used, he said.

According to him, the amendment to the auction conditions was made to attract more potential bidders to the auction.

AM Thanapant, who also serves



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DR SARANA BOONBAICHAIPRUCK
Chairman, NBTC board

as a head of an NBTC subcommittee studying the amendment to the auction conditions, said the public hearing of the auction condition draft would be held from August to September. It is expected to be published in the *Royal Gazette* in October.

The purchase of bid envelopes would be held in November and the auction conducted in December, he said.

The NBTC has now been under close watch about its move to regulate the planned merger of True Corporation and Total Access Communication (DTAC), the No 2 and 3 mobile operators in terms of subscriber base.

Dr Sarana Boonbaichaiyapruk, chairman of the NBTC board, said all reports from its four subcommittees vetting the deal, a summary of focused group hearings and the NBTC management's related proposal will be forwarded to the board on Aug 3.

"Clarity about the issue will come after Aug 3 and the deliberation should not take a long time," said Dr Sarana.

Dr Sarana said the NBTC board has no bias regarding its consideration of the deal.