5G networks to roll out next year, cover at least half of Singapore by end-2022

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SINGAPORE — The Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA) launched a Call for Proposal (CFP) on Thursday (17 October) to facilitate the rolling out of 5G mobile networks by 2020, with the aim of providing full-fledged 5G capability covering at least half of Singapore by end-2022.

According to a media release, IMDA will put up two equal spectrum packages for bids among the four existing mobile network operators – Singtel, StarHub, M1 and TPG Telecom – under the CFP. It will then assess the proposals on criteria such as network security design, network performance and spectrum offer price.

The two selected operators will be required to deploy the 3.5 GHz spectrum band on a standalone basis – meaning not piggybacking on existing mobile networks – to unlock the full 5G capabilities.

The agency will also assign two lots of mmWave spectrum to the remaining two mobile network operators, who can deploy them by using their existing 4G infrastructure to deliver 5G services focusing on higher broadband speeds.

The CFP will run until 21 January next year. Awarding of the spectrum packages is expected to take place by mid-2020.

In a media statement on Thursday, StarHub said it will be submitting a proposal for a "resilient and secure 5G network design".

"StarHub is working to discover what works and what does not for the unique Singaporean market. It is conducting trials and proof-of-concepts with its 5G ecosystem of technology, business, institutes of higher learning and public agency partners," said Sebastian Tan, head of the telco's 5G business unit.

All four telcos to eventually provide 5G service

Speaking at the IMDA's SG: Digital Industry Day on Thursday, Minister for Communications and Information S Iswaran said that the local market has room to accommodate two other localised 5G networks, thus allowing all four existing telcos to eventually provide this service.

"As the next evolution in mobile communications, 5G will be the backbone of Singapore's digital economy," Iswaran said in the media release.

"With a trusted, secure and resilient 5G standalone infrastructure in place, we can invest in, and support the growth of, a thriving 5G innovation ecosystem... This will secure Singapore's competitive edge, and enhance our appeal as a key trading and connectivity hub in the region and beyond."

Three new industry partnerships to explore 5G use

To encourage the development of an open and inclusive 5G innovation ecosystem, IMDA announced that it will be supporting three new industry partnerships to explore the uses of 5G network:

- IMDA, Razer and Singtel are aiming to test 5G for cloud gaming in an urban environment.
- CapitaLand, TPG Telecom and Navinfo Datatech are in a partnership to develop a 5G-smart estate at Singapore Science Parks One and Two. They hope to develop vehicle-to-everything technologies to improve the reaction time and braking distance of autonomous vehicles, and to better provide real-time alerts on traffic situations.
- M1 and Nanyang Technological University are launching the NTU Connected Smart Mobility Testbed to research and test new 5G vehicle communications solutions at the NTU campus.

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