INTERNET

Govt mulls imposing service provider fees

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The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) is floating an idea to force over-the-top (OTT) service providers to pay what it calls "traffic usage fees" to internal internet gateway (IIG) operators in the country.

The planned payment will be calculated on the volume of incoming data traffic of the OTT services, which provide film and TV content via the internet.

The move aims to come up with fair and proper measures for telecom network owners who have invested heavily to expand their networks. It is also aimed at paving the way for the adoption of fifth-generation (5G) technology next year when data traffic growth of mobile devices will rise rapidly.

NBTC secretary-general Takorn Tantasith said the idea is not aimed at collecting more taxes for the state as had been previously discussed.

Mr Takorn said under the scheme the telecom regulator will cooperate with IIG operators to classify OTT service operators from the volume of their traffic usage. They will be split into two groups, small OTT service providers and more major ones.

He said the former will not be affected by the scheme while the latter, which consumes huge volumes of data traffic on internet networks will have to pay usage fees to IIG operators, through a progressive rate system.

IIG operators would cap the internet speed of their services on internet networks.

"If the big OTT service providers consume traffic usage beyond the cap, they will have to pay progressive fees to avoid speed limits of their services in the country," Mr Takorn said yesterday at a seminar under the theme of "5G awakening Thai" held by the NBTC and Matichon group.

There are 17 IIG operators in the country. The four biggest are CAT Telecom, TIC, Advanced Wireless Network (AWN), and CS Loxinfo.