

BROADCASTING

AIS shown red card over footie coverage

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Thailand's biggest mobile operator, Advanced Info Service (AIS), has been ordered to stop broadcasting World Cup games on its AIS Play application according to a June 26 order by the Central Intellectual Property and International Trade Court.

The move came after TrueVisions Group recently petitioned the court to seek protection for its broadcasting rights after alleging a violation by two subsidiaries of AIS; namely, Mimo Tech and Super Broadband Network, over their inclusion of World Cup matches on an AIS mobile application.

AIS countered that its Play app includes the free Thai TV stations, which have been showing Fifa World Cup 2018 matches, in accordance National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission's (NBTC) "must-carry" rules, although the company itself has neither a licence from Fifa nor permission from TrueVisions Group, which is the mediator supervising the broadcasting rights of this year's World Cup tournament in Thailand.

The court on Tuesday ordered the two companies to stop showing matches on the AIS Play app as it considered the mobile broadcasts of the games by the two companies to be a violation of TrueVisions Group's rights for the tournament.

In a statement, TrueVisions Group said it is concerned that Fifa may terminate its

contract due to copyright infringement by other companies which might jeopardise Thai football fans' ability to watch Fifa events in the future.

Live broadcasts of all World Cup matches are currently available on various channels such as the Royal Thai Army's Channel 5, True4U Channel 24, Amarin TV Channel 34 and their official websites.

Mobile users can download the trueID application, which includes live broadcasts of all the games from Apple's App Store and Google Play.

Takorn Tantasith, secretary-general of the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC), said all related companies have to comply with the court's order.

Although the NBTC currently has a "must-carry" which states that locally licensed television stations must be carried on a cable provider's system, this rule does not apply to mobile applications, said Mr Takorn.

Also, the must-carry rule does not apply where it may result in international copyright laws being broken.

A source at the NBTC said the organisation has invited both True Corp and AIS for talks over the issue.

However, a representative from True Corp reiterated that AIS must comply with the court's order and expressed no wish to participate in talks.