

Australian court bans sales of Samsung Galaxy tab

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People walk by a Samsung store in Sydney, Thursday, Oct. 13, 2011. An Australian court temporarily banned Samsung from selling its new Galaxy Tab 10.1 tablet computer in the country, after rival technology giant Apple accused the company of copying features from its popular iPad tablet. (AP Photo/Rick Rycroft)

A court has temporarily banned Samsung from selling its new Galaxy tablet computer in Australia, another setback for the South Korean electronics giant in a global patent battle with Apple Inc. that accuses it of slavishly copying the iPad and iPhone. A court has temporarily banned Samsung from selling its new Galaxy tablet computer in Australia, another setback for the South Korean electronics giant in a global patent battle with Apple Inc. that accuses it of slavishly copying the iPad and iPhone.

Federal Court Justice Annabelle Bennett on Thursday granted a temporary injunction against sales of Samsung's Galaxy Tab 10.1 in Australia. The decision prevents Samsung Electronics Co. from selling the device in Australia in its current form until a further court order, or until a pending patent lawsuit between the warring technology giants is resolved.

The ruling is a blow for Samsung, which had hoped to launch the new product in time for Christmas sales. It comes after courts in other countries including Germany and the Netherlands made judgments that upheld Apple's claims that its intellectual property had been appropriated by Samsung.

The patent battle spanning 10 countries has underlined the perception of Samsung as an efficient imitator among technology companies rather than a pace setter. Over the years, the company has grown to become the global No. 1 in TVs and No. 2 in smartphones by sales. But unlike archrival Apple Inc., it has not mesmerized consumers with its originality and innovation.

In April, Cupertino, California-based Apple Inc. sued Samsung in the United States, alleging the product design, user interface and packaging of Samsung's Galaxy devices "slavishly copy" the iPhone and iPad.

Suwon, South Korea-based Samsung Electronics Co. fought back with lawsuits of its own, accusing Apple of patent infringement of its wireless telecommunications technology.

Apple filed the Australian lawsuit in July, accusing Samsung of copying its touch screen technology. In her ruling Thursday, Bennett said she was granting the temporary injunction in part because she felt Apple had a sufficient likelihood of winning the trial against Samsung.

The judge's full orders will not be published until Friday. It was not immediately clear whether Samsung could - or would - attempt to sell a variation of the device that removed the features Apple objected to in the Australian lawsuit.

"We are disappointed with this ruling and Samsung will be seeking legal advice on its options," Samsung said in a statement. "Samsung will continue its legal proceeding against Apple's claim in order to ensure our innovative products remain available to consumers."

Samsung, which filed its Australian countersuit in September, said it remained confident it could prove Apple violated its wireless technology patents.

"We will continue to legally assert our intellectual property rights against those who violate Samsung's patents and free ride on our technology," the company said in a statement.

An attorney for Apple declined to comment after the hearing.

Samsung shares fell 0.9 percent to 890,000 won in Seoul.

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