

Law enforcement training helps to suppress counterfeiting

The Royal Thai Customs Department has a pro-active policy to stop illegal goods from entering the Thai market and damaging the public's confidence in consuming imported goods. Brand owners such as Nokia, Levi Strauss, Daimler Chrysler, HP, Casio and Ferrari have dedicated tremendous resources and jointly proposed giving customs officers product identification training to assist them in profiling and inspecting suspect shipments.

The training demonstrated how to identify and differentiate between genuine and counterfeit products coming in and out of Thailand, as well as helping to suppress the distribution of imported counterfeit goods in Thailand.

In 2006, training sessions on product identification were held in many significant ports around Bangkok, including Klong Toey, Laem Chabang, Lat Krabang, Don Muang, and Bang Saotong. Sessions were also organised in well-recognised areas such as transshipment hubs in the north like Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai (the border between Thailand and Burma), Nong Khai (the border between Thailand and Laos), and Aranyaprathet (the border between Thailand and Cambodia).

The customs officers in attendance responded with interest and enthusiasm, and most of them said it was an excellent opportunity for them to learn about product identification.

Aside from imported counterfeit products, another problem that intellectual property rights owners face is local manufacturing in Thailand for sale in the Thai market or for export.

The Department of Intellectual Property (DIP) enforcement team, including other concerned enforcement officials such as law enforcement officials from the Department of Special Investigation (DSI) and Ministry of Justice, were also invited to join the product identification training that held in Bangkok at the end of 2006.

In the beginning of 2007, a high-ranking

police officer responsible for the suppression of IPR violations for trademarks in Bangkok requested a training session for his police team. The police at the Economic Technological Crime Suppression Division (Ecotec), the Public Prosecutor's Office, and the Department of Intellectual Property were also asked to provide knowledge on intellectual property law at this event.

These training sessions encourage law enforcement officers to closely monitor the market for counterfeit products imported or sold in the Thai market. They also help officers realise that the brand owners involved are very serious about protecting their IPR.

After the training sessions were conducted at the customs ports, the number of seizure cases at the end of 2006 increased greatly — about four times higher than the number of cases at the beginning of the year.

These seizures reflect the Customs Department's aggressive measures to hold importers liable for importing illegal goods.

Professional Thai law enforcement officials have shown remarkable leadership in their commitment to protecting intellectual property rights. The excellent cooperation and assertiveness stemmed from their concern for consumer safety and their desire to prevent consumers from being deceived as to the origin and quality of illegal products. Rights owners have been impressed. Brand owners remain confident that the government's ongoing suppression actions against sellers and importers or exporters of counterfeit products will be sustained, and that support for such enforcement efforts will continue to be provided.

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