

# Fake products on the increase in Lao markets

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Fake products have been increasing in Laos and regional markets, adversely affecting the investment climate as well as causing many other problems, officials have said.

Director General of the Intellectual Property Department, Ministry of Science and Technology, Mr Sitha Phouaythavong, said fake or copied products have been coming from neighbouring countries onto the Lao market, noting that the volumes of such products have been increasing.

Speaking at a training seminar in Vientiane yesterday on the Identification of Counterfeit and Genuine Products, Mr Sitha said "Counterfeit products have been directly impacting the development of intellectual property protection and discouraging inventors who have been dedicating their intellect and energy to producing creative inventions."

Representatives from line agencies, tax officials, economic police officers, prosecutors, officials from the courts and the commerce and industry sector attended the seminar to learn from Thai trainers about the differences between genuine and counterfeit goods.

Mr Sitha listed a few major impacts that imitation goods can cause. "Firstly,



Mr Sitha Phouaythavong.

they restrict the creative invention of researchers," he said, explaining that inventors would feel discouraged if their creation, on which they have spent a lot of time and effort, can be copied by others and sold openly.

Secondly, buyers will be disadvantaged if they spend money on a brand-name product only to find it is not genuine but a copy.

Even more dangerously, he noted, is the situation with products such as foods, medicines and cosmetics that, if found to be counterfeit, could put people's health at risk, even to the point of causing death.

Recognising the critical importance of the issue, the department, in collaboration with Thai-based Tillike and Gibbins International, organised the training in an effort to improve the ability of Lao officials to differentiate between fake and genuine

articles.

This was aimed at enabling officials to better manage the issue in line with the relevant laws, especially the Law on Intellectual Property as well as conforming to the regulations of the World Trade Organisation, which Laos is expected to be granted membership of in the near future.

In addition, it will also create conditions favourable for trading activities and develop a more investment-friendly climate.

A representative of Tillike and Gibbins International said counterfeit products have been increasingly found in many countries, despite governments having exerted efforts to cope with the problem.

She stressed the need for both the government and private sectors to closely cooperate in tackling the problem.