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IP Enforcement Training for Government Officers in Laos and Cambodia

As trade barriers continue to be reduced in ASEAN, a larger number of counterfeit products are likely to be circulated within the region. It is therefore important for companies to ensure that their intellectual property enforcement training is not only focused on government officials in relatively developed countries like Thailand, but also reaches the authorities in emerging markets, such as Laos and Cambodia, where an increasing number of counterfeit goods can be found.

With this in mind, Tilleke & Gibbins cooperated with several of our major clients to hold IP enforcement training sessions for government officers in Vientiane, Laos, on September 14, 2012, and in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, on October 11, 2012. These were groundbreaking events, as they represented the first time that key government agencies have collaborated with private companies to cohost events dedicated to IP enforcement training in these countries.

Laos

Tilleke & Gibbins and four famous brand owners, including companies focused on alcoholic beverages, cosmetics, consumer products, and luxury goods, arranged a training seminar intended to raise general IP knowledge and awareness among Laos government officers and educate them on how to identify genuine and counterfeit products.

The training was useful in facilitating an exchange of experiences among the government officers and brand owners when pursuing enforcement actions against infringers, while also promoting cooperation between the public and private sectors. It also provided the officers with information about whom they should contact when they find suspected counterfeit products or when they have any problems concerning suspicious goods.

The 81 IP enforcement officers in attendance—representing a diverse range of government agencies, such as the Laos Department of Intellectual Property (DIP), tax officials, economic police officers, prosecutors, court officials, and commerce and industry representatives—responded positively to the training and expressed interest in the products that were displayed in the exhibition.

The training was cohosted by the DIP, Ministry of Science and Technology, in collaboration with Tilleke & Gibbins and the four participating brands. Mr. Sitha Phouyavong, the Director General of the DIP, presided over the event. Recognizing that this was the first such event held by the DIP, Mr. Phouyavong was enthusiastic about the outcome, and informed the audience that he would like to continue arranging this type of training in Laos, as it provides a unique learning opportunity for the dedicated

officers who carry out IP enforcement in the country.

Cambodia

Following the success of the Laos event, a similar IP enforcement training session in October brought together 78 officers from Cambodian government agencies such as the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, the Department of Intellectual Property Rights, the Department of Customs (CAMCONTROL), the Ministry of Industry, Mines, and Energy, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, the Ministry of Justice, and the Department of Anti-Economic Crimes Prosecutors.

Seven of the most recognizable brands in the world participated in the Cambodia training, including companies focused on alcoholic beverages, apparel, consumer products, luxury goods, and more.

The training session was cohosted by the Secretariat of the National Committee for Intellectual Property Rights and the Department of Intellectual Property Rights, Ministry of Commerce, in collaboration with Tilleke & Gibbins. His Excellency Var Roth San, Advisor to the Ministry of Commerce and Head of the Secretariat of National Committee for Intellectual Property Rights (NCIPR), Director of Intellectual Property Rights, the Ministry of Commerce, presided over the event.



Impact

Both events attracted a great deal of media attention. In Laos, the *Vientiane Times* described the success of the seminar in creating conditions favorable for trading activities and helping to develop a more investment-friendly climate. In Cambodia, the event was featured in two newspapers, both of which emphasized the need for such training and how local authorities have not previously been fully equipped to detect infringement, nor have they been educated on the impact of enforcement of IP rights.

In addition to media coverage, the brands that participated in the events were able to educate and develop goodwill with key government authorities, and they expect to see a tangible impact in the enforcement of their rights in each country. Given the level of interest among the government officers, these may be just the first in a series of training sessions in these countries, as Laos and Cambodia push to strengthen their IP enforcement regimes. 🍷