

## IP tribunals established

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The Intellectual Property Organisation of Pakistan Act 2012 was introduced to establish the Intellectual Property Organisation (IPO), an autonomous body that aims to synchronise the work of the Trademarks Registry, the Patent Office and the Central Copyright Office. The act focuses on *inter alia*:

- establishing the policy framework;
- establishing IP tribunals;
- facilitating the enforcement of IP rights;
- strengthening IP protection; and
- increasing public awareness of IP rights.

To consolidate the act, the federal government established IP tribunals in Punjab, Sindh and Islamabad Capital Territory (within specified territorial limits) to adjudicate on IP disputes under presiding officers selected from high court, district and session court judges or attorneys who qualify for appointment through their expert knowledge of IP law. The act also provides that in cases of a technical nature, tribunals may be assisted by IP rights experts.

The establishment of IP tribunals signals the start of a new specialised judiciary that will have enhanced understanding of IP law and deal exclusively with matters relating to IP rights. The tribunals exercise civil and criminal jurisdiction to try any IP-related offence under the Code of Civil Procedure 1908 and the Code of Criminal Procedure 1898. Further, all suits and civil proceedings involving IP law will be tried by the tribunal and all suits and proceedings pending under IP law will be transferred to the tribunal with jurisdiction.

In September 2015 the government appointed the former registrar of copyrights as the presiding officer of the IP tribunal in Karachi (Sindh). This is a positive step in line with appointing dedicated judges with a better understanding of the IP regime in Pakistan.

The establishment of IP tribunals demonstrates Pakistan's continued commitment to improved protection and awareness of IP rights, which will give confidence to rights holders and facilitate economic growth.

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