

# Intellectual Property Organisation consults with enforcement agencies to improve Pakistan's IP image

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## Introduction

### Improving Pakistan's IP image

#### Comment

## Introduction

There have been many significant developments concerning Pakistan's IP regime in recent years in order to improve IP protection, create public awareness and develop IP rights enforcement, including:

- the Intellectual Property Organisation's promulgation of Ordinance 2012 (the purpose of which was to harmonise the operations of the Trademarks Registry, the Patent Office and the Central Copyright Office);
- the establishment of IP tribunals to adjudicate on IP disputes in Pakistan's major cities; and
- the establishment of the Directorate General of IP Rights Enforcement, Pakistan Customs (to enforce IP laws and curb the trade of counterfeit and smuggled goods) and the Intellectual Property Organisation's online portal for filing applications and searches to provide users with more information (eg, the status of their applications).

More recent developments include:

- the publication of the Draft Geographical Indication Protection Bill 2016 for review (to provide improved protection of marks consisting of geographical signs or indications of Pakistani origin);
- the Memorandum of Understanding between the Intellectual Property Organisation and the Federal Board of Revenue (for data sharing and collaboration for the enforcement of IP rights); and
- the recent amendment to the Customs Rules 2001, which inserted a new chapter regarding IP rights enforcement (to address, in particular, the import of infringing goods into Pakistan). Customs is also in the process of developing an online portal to streamline this process and provide for the speedy protection of and remedies for IP rights holders.

These are some of the bold steps that have been taken towards the protection, promotion and enforcement of IP rights in Pakistan. The Intellectual Property Organisation closely collaborates with the Federal Board of Revenue and Customs to control the movement of infringing or counterfeit products at Pakistan's borders. The Competition Commission has also been active in pursuing IP infringement cases under the Competition Act 2010 and has handed down a number of decisions concerning IP infringement (eg, deceptive marketing practices) in Pakistan.

## Improving Pakistan's IP image

IP enforcement agencies recently held a meeting at the Intellectual Property Organisation that was chaired by its director general and attended by its:

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- enforcement director and executive director;
- the director general of IP enforcement rights and Customs; and
- other stakeholders.

The meeting was also attended by senior officers from Customs, the Federal Investigation Agency, the Electronic Media Regulatory Authority, the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan and Islamabad Capital Territory Police.

The meeting discussed how to improve Pakistan's international IP image and saw the authorities adopt certain proactive approaches. In this regard, the enforcement agencies unanimously resolved to improve Pakistan's IP image through the introduction of the following steps in IP enforcement.

- When referring to various international reports outlining IP protection in different countries, such as the US Chamber of Commerce's International IP Index, the World Intellectual Property Organisation's (WIPO's) Global Innovation Index and the World Economic Forum's Annual Competitiveness Report, it was emphasised that the improvement of Pakistan's IP image internationally could be achieved by adopting certain similar proactive approaches.
- IP progress reports should be shared with Pakistan's missions in different countries to provide up-to-date information regarding the IP situation in Pakistan. It was also stressed that enforcement agencies' annual reports must be shared with Pakistan's missions in different countries.
- In order to improve Pakistan's global IP ranking, it is crucial to improve reporting systems and the coordination process among different government organisations.
- Annual progress reports should be shared to enhance cooperation with multilateral international forums like the WIPO and World Trade Organisation.

## **Comment**

Improving coordination between different government organisations and providing timely IP reports to Pakistan's missions abroad would reveal Pakistan's true IP image and avoid any incorrect indications thereof. Further, such reports will allow Pakistan to keep up to date with progress in the protection of IP rights and provide a basis for comparison with other international standards. Such a process is likely to be implemented successfully and should yield impressive results and improve the protection of IP rights, as well as Pakistan's image on an international stage.

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