

## 97% of patents granted in RP belong to foreign applicants

FOREIGN companies are still the ones are taking advantage of patent protection in the country due to the lack of awareness on the intellectual property system among Filipinos.

Adrian Cristobal Jr., director general of the Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines (IP Phils.), said records from the agency show that about 97 percent of patents applied for and granted in the country belong to foreign applicants, and only about 3 percent are owned by Filipinos.

"One factor that hinders patenting is the lack of knowledge and understanding of the IP system, specifically the patent application

processes," Cristobal said.

With this, Cristobal said IP Phils. put together a three-year strategic plan to institute patent reform programs which aspire to improve the patent practice and administration in the country.

A part of this is the Patent Agent Qualifying Examination (PAQE), which is an annual examination given to individuals seeking professional careers in patent agency. PAQE, a major program of IP Phils. is supported by the European Patent Office and the EC-Asean Intellectual Property Right Co-operation Program.

"IP Phils. institutionalized the exam process to professionalize

the patent-agency practice in the Philippines. We need to establish a cadre of patent agents who have the appropriate technical and science disciplines to assist our inventors in patenting their creations," he said.

Majority of the examinees of this year's PAQE are from government-funded research institutions such as the Department of Science and Technology and the Department of Agriculture. Law firms also sent their IP lawyers to take the exam.

Prior to taking the PAQE, all candidates should finish a pre-requisite five-day patent drafting workshop with IP Phils.' Intel-

tual Property Research and Training Institute (IPRTI).

"IPRTI seminars and workshops this year are geared to train potential candidates such as IP lawyers, patent agents and inventors from public and private research institutions to develop their skills in effective patent application," said IPRTI Director Celia Torres-Vilanueva.

Among the IPRTI courses offered were on Patents and Patentability, Introduction to Patent Drafting and Chemistry and Engineering Courses for IP Lawyers, a short course for IP lawyers without science or engineering backgrounds.

Patent agents are professionals

who assist those who file patent applications with IP Philippines.

Examinees may either choose the chemistry exam or the non-chemistry exam (which focuses on mechanical and electrical engineering).

Patent reform, where programs of the IPRTI fall under, is among the policy areas in Philippine IP strategy, which also covers public health; universities and research and development institutions; biodiversity and genetic resources; indigenous knowledge, systems and practices, folklore and geographic indications; small and medium enterprises; and institutional capacity building and IP enforcement. **M.V. de Leon**