

## **Customs' institutional reforms push piracy enforcement up**

The Bureau of Customs (BoC), a member agency of the National Committee for Intellectual Property Rights (NCIPR), pulled in the highest value of seized pirated items according to the 2006 enforcement report of the Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines (IP Philippines). The Bureau's comprehensive plan in enforcing intellectual property rights resulted in marked improvement in its operations for 2006, contributing 55 percent or P723 million to the total equivalent value of NCIPR's seized goods estimated at P1.3 billion.

"For one, we have established a permanent IP Unit which covers major ports in the country including outports, and monitors suspected shipments with IPR violation. We have also created the ASEAN Single Window System that requires a common declaration form and single data for export and import among the ten member states," BoC Commissioner Napoleon L. Morales said. "In addition, we have received a lot of technical and financial support from our international partners namely, the Japanese government and the European Commission," he added.

Morales likewise heads the Task Force on Anti-Smuggling (TFAS) formed through Executive Order 509 where IPR infringement is top priority.

"BoC's performance in enforcing IPR is an indication of how policy reforms, technology application, and an overall commitment to the committee's collective goals can turn in a positive result. Although BoC took the lead in having the highest value of confiscated goods, all NCIPR member agencies as well as the private sector contributed to the improvement of enforcement operations in 2006. We laud their efforts and their contributions," Atty. Adrian S. Cristobal, Director General of IP Philippines, said.

BoC received a grant of P500 million from the Japanese government to further develop its data warehousing and data mining. The project, once completed, would help detect imports with IPR violation. The Bureau likewise obtained P85.5 million from the European Commission to upgrade its risk management system and its valuation database (international) component, and training ware. An upgraded system can detect IPR violations of incoming shipments at an earlier period.

Last year, BoC has renewed its agreement with the Philippine Postal Corporation (PhilPost) that resulted in an increase in the number of seizures of optical media and prohibited cargoes coursed through the postal mail and cargo services. It also proposed a National Single Window for Cargo Clearance that provides for an organizational and computerized connection between the Bureau and its 20 partner agencies that issue clearances, permits and authority before releasing imported and exported goods.

Aside from policy reforms, BoC has likewise invested heavily on technological projects in 2006. It procured non-intrusive container inspection systems (x-ray machines) that were deployed in the Port of Manila; Manila International Container Port; Batangas; Subic and; Cebu. The Bureau in partnership with the Department of Finance also installed a baggage x-ray machine for arriving passengers at Clark Airport.

Other NCIPR member agencies include the Optical Media Board, National Bureau of Investigation, Philippine National Police, Department of Justice, Department of Interior and Local Government, National Book Development Board, and the National Telecommunications Commission.

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