

Monthly Report of May 2002

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THAILAND

News in May 2002

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1. Thai Govt declares war on intellectual property violations

(from Xinhua News Agency Bulletin, 1 May 2002

Thai News Service, 3 May 2002)

The Thai government has announced a fresh crackdown on violators of intellectual property rights, warning that anyone caught violating copyright laws would be subject to immediate and stringent prosecution.

Speaking after a meeting of metropolitan police officers to discuss the problem of copyright violations, Somsak Kiersuranon, chairman of the sub-committee for the prevention of intellectual property violations, said that the police commanders present conceded that their past efforts to stamp out pirated goods had not always been successful.

Somsak called on the private sector to come to the aid of the police, saying that copyright owners should inform the police in the 27 police districts in question. The government aimed to turn the 27 police districts whose commissioners attended the meeting into zones free from pirated goods, he added.

2. Minister aims to curb piracy

*(from Bangkok Post Newspaper, Database Section, Page 1, Thailand, 1 May 2002
Bangkok Post Newspaper, Home News Section, Page 2, Thailand, 2 May 2002)*

Commerce Deputy Minister Newin Chidchob has set an ambitious goal to reduce the country's software piracy rate to under 70% this year. The deputy minister added that the Commerce Ministry is going to set up the Intellectual Property Department Complaints Centre this month with cooperation from related public agencies and the DIP.

Today, the centre is available and has hotline numbers 02-622-2160 and 02-622-2130, although these will be changed to four-digit numbers soon, said DIP director general Yanyong Phuanrach. The Commerce Ministry has also discussed the issues with copyright owners, particularly software pricing as pricing is a factor that encourages piracy.

3. Music sellers hail copyright fee proposal

(from Bangkok Post Newspaper, Business Section, Page 8, Thailand, 4 May 2002)

A new system, claimed to be open and fair, will be proposed to control the collection of music copyright fees. The Commerce Ministry's proposal would require copyright owners to tell the Internal Trade Department of the number and details of songs involved, the fee charged and the name of the collection agency.

Apirak Kosayodhin, the president and CEO of GMM Grammy Plc welcomed the move, saying the new measure would be fair to both music suppliers and users. The company was willing to provide the information sought, he said. Its fees are collected by MGA Co, a Grammy subsidiary.

Sutthisak Prastkarukarn, the copyright manager of RS Promotion 1992 Co said the measure would improve understanding between music copyright owners and music users, ending their dispute.

4. Pro-Link gets the rights to four new Ultraman characters

*(from Thai Rat Newspaper, Page 4, Thailand, 10 May 2002
Thai News Service, 20 May 2002)*

Suburaya Productions of Japan has given Pro-Link the exclusive rights to the four newest Ultraman superhero characters. In the past 30 years Suburaya Production has not appointed any licensed representative of the Ultraman children's TV show characters in Thailand.

In an unrelated development, Suburaya has decided to give Pro-Link the rights to four new Ultraman characters for use in the manufacture of various merchandise. The new characters are Ultraman Tiga, Ultraman Dina, Ultraman Gaiya and Ultraman Cosmos.

5. Broadcaster probed over plans to introduce copyright charges

(from Bangkok Post Newspaper, Prime News Section, page 1, Thailand, 11 May 2002)

The Trade Competition Board is looking into whether DhoSpaak Communication Agency, holder of the rights to broadcast World Cup matches locally, has violated trade competition laws.

The board, under the Commerce Ministry said it would investigate DhoSpakk's appointment of Siam Sport Syndicate Plc to collect copyright fees from restaurants and entertainment venues showing World Cup matches as an attraction while selling beverages from major sponsors.

The board has assigned its secretariat, the Internal Trade Department, to ask the company about its conditions set for this even, according to Deputy Commerce Minister Newin Chidchob, who attended the board's first meeting since the Thaksin Shinawatra government came into power.

"If DhoSpakk has set conditions that do not allow other brands of beverages to be sold, that will be in violation of article 29 of the (trade competition) law," said Mr Newin.

A source in the beverages industry said DhoSpaak had stated that no restaurants or beverages shops could use the phrase "World Cup 2002" in their promotional campaigns, or they would face legal action. However, the source said, restaurants and shops selling Saeng Soom and Chang products would be allowed to use the phrase.

6. Grammy changes its tune

(from The Nation Newspaper, Local News Section, Page 3A, Thailand, 15 May 2002

Bangkok Post Newspaper, Home News Section, Page 3, Thailand, 15 May 2002

Bangkok Post Newspaper, Home News Section, Page 3, Thailand, 18 May 2002)

Owners of karaoke bars have received a reprieve from a police crackdown after the country's largest recording firm, GMM Grammy Plc, agreed to postpone the collection of copyright fees pending a review. The firms would be obliged to provide details on the music involved and the amounts of fees charged, as well as the names of their collection agencies.

Earlier this week, karaoke bar owners called for the government to introduce measures to end the dispute over the collection of copyright fees.

7. Another threat to the pirates

(from The Nation Newspaper, Byteline Section, Page 8B, Thailand, 20 May 2002)

To tackle the software piracy situation in Thailand the Commerce Ministry has again come out with another aggressive plan to reduce the violation rate to less than 70 per cent by the end of the year. Currently the piracy rate stands at 79 per cent.

To succeed, the Commerce Ministry will work with the Royal Thai Police to vigorously enforce suppression.

According to deputy minister Newin Chidchob, the ministry recently set up what it called the Intellectual Property Infringement Centre as a single point of contact to pool all complaints and information relating to software violations.

The police have set up 11 special teams to take care of software violations, the teams, comprising 120 policeman, will work with the IP Infringement Centre to process all complaints logged under the country's copyright law.

To encourage people to buy the more expensive legal software, Newin said the ministry plans to put such products under the control of the ministry's Internal Price Control Committee. The committee normally looks after the price of products sold in the country to ensure they are reasonable for most consumers, as well as taking care of consumer protection matters.

8. Steamed up to crash music pirates

*(from Bangkok Post Newspaper, Home News Section, Page 4, Thailand, 22 May 2002
The Nation Newspaper, Local News Section, Page 4A, Thailand, 22 May 2002
MX, 22 May 2002)*

A steamroller crushes nearly 70,000 pirated CDs during a destruction ceremony outside a Thai Customs office in Bangkok. More than 200 unauthorised games were also destroyed in the event, which was designed to send a message to the pirates.

9. Thailand demands Ricotech stop using the "Jasmati" name.

(from Thai News Service, 28 May 2002)

Thailand's foreign commerce office in the US has sued Ricotech for confusing consumers with the "Jasmati" trademark. A US company, Ricotech has been selling rice under the brand name "Jasmati" which sounds similar the "Jasmine" name used by Thai rice companies.

Thailand's trade representatives in the US have submitted a complaint to the US Federal Trade Commission to demand that Ricotech stop using the "Jasmati" name. They claim that consumers may be confused into thinking that the products sold under that name actually fragrant jasmine rice from Thailand, which is a national treasure and a part of Thai culture.

10. New law to solve fee dispute

(from Bangkok Post Newspaper, Business Section, Page 3, Thailand, 31 May 2002)

A more transparent music copyright collection system is expected to be in place next week when an amendment to the Goods and Services Act is passed, according to Newin Chidchob, a deputy commerce minister. The amendment would require all music copyright owners to register with the Internal Trade Department. It would be approved by the cabinet next week and immediately enforced as law, he said.

Under the law, copyright owners will have to provide details about the music involved and the fee amounts charged, as well as the names of their collection agencies. If they did not provide details to the Internal Trade Department, they would be in breach of the law and lose the right to collect copyright fees from karaoke operators.

Mr Newin urged all parties involved to end their marathon dispute at the negotiating table, since the law alone could not resolve the complex issue. Karaoke operators said they were not pleased with Mr Newin's initiative. They said the legal amendment should also control the actual fees in order to help operators survive in the business.

However, Mr Newin said he would not interfere with pricing because karaoke was not an essential product that could fall under the department's price-control regime. He said it was very difficult to define a fair price for music copyright due to the cost of intellectual property.

In addition, Mr Newin said he wanted to have many collection agencies in the market as an alternative for karaoke operators.

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

News in May 2002

1. Beijing patent invention ranked no. 1 in value in China
2. Software group urges piracy fight
3. Publishers in first push to protect inventions
4. China DVD makers win royalty deal with Japan firms
5. New regulation to be patently obvious
6. Protocol to improve rights safeguards
7. English web site for intellectual property in China
8. China accepts 245,000 foreign patent applications

1. Beijing patent invention ranked no. 1 in value in China
(from *Asiainfo Services*, 6 & 7 May 2002)

Beijing had over 100 patent service firms, and intellectual property service has become newly emerging industry. On April 26 2002, State Intellectual Property Office, Beijing Intellectual Property Office, and General Administration of Customs held the spot consulting campaign in Beijing.

In the campaign, "the expense for application of patent", "the lawsuit of infringement of patent" and "the period of patent protection" became the most concerning issues. On the spot of the campaign, some patents owners made deals with patent service firms instantly.

Beijing invested 4969 patents, which ranked No. 1 in China. The realization of patents engendered nearly ten billion yuan in 2001. Currently, Beijing had 84 patent agencies, 38 patent appraisal firms, which occupied one fourth of the total number in China. The total employment in patent service industry reached several thousands.

2. Software group urges piracy fight
(from *Xinhua's China Economic Information Service*, 9 May 2002)

Jeffrey J. Hardee, vice-president of the BSA Asia, urged China to continue its efforts to fight against software piracy through legislation, law enforcement and education. The association has worked with the Chinese Government to stop piracy through education on copyright policies, and the collection of information on illegal software producers and users through its hotline and

website. Hardee said piracy, especially by business uses, made it difficult for the software industry to grow.

3. Publishers in first push to protect inventions
(from *South China Morning Post*, 13 May 2002)

Pressure to safeguard intellectual property rights in China will grow as domestic companies increasingly seek to protect their developments and inventions. Linklaters partners Tom Hope cited an example of software publisher associations in China who are in favour of intellectual property protection for their own products. Prior to such developments the pressure for better protection of intellectual property came almost entirely from overseas companies who saw their products being pirated.

4. China DVD makers win royalty deal with Japan firms
(from *Asiainfo Services*, 1 & 14 May 2002
Reuters News Service, 14 May 2002
Interfax Weekly Bulletin, 14 May 2002
China Economic Information Network, 16 May 2002)

After years of sometimes heated negotiations, Chinese DVD player manufacturers have reached a deal on royalty payments with the firms holding patents to the technology, state media said. Under a deal later reached by the two sides, Chinese DVD makers will pay about a four per cent patent fee rather than about 16 per cent, which the patent holders were originally demanding.

5. New regulation to be patently obvious
(from *China Daily*, 21 May 2002)

The government has issued a regulation to help clarify the ownership of intellectual property rights for significant research projects. IPR ownership of major scientific projects – except those related to national security and important social benefits – will be granted to those who actually carry out the research work.

The regulation has been approved by the State Council and aims to enhance the awareness of IPR protection and stimulate technology invention and commercialization, said Shi Dinghuan, secretary-general of the Ministry of Science and Technology. Research institutes with financial difficulties in patent application and protection will be given special grants to let them sustain patent protection from government allocation for scientific projects.

6. Protocol to improve rights safeguards
(from *China Daily* 22 May 2002
BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific-Political, 22 May 2002
Interfax China Weekly Bulletin, 22 May 2002
Bername Daily Malaysian News, 22 May 2002
Reuters News Service, 23 May 2002
Xinhua's China Economic Information Service, 23 May 2002)

A cooperation framework protocol to improve mutual efforts in developing intellectual property was signed yesterday in Beijing. The SIPO of China and the WIPO put their signatures on the protocol which will focus on protecting copyright and patents.

Other priority areas include the protection of intellectual property in e-commerce, domain names and other Internet-related issues, safeguarding rights of small and medium sized firms, and the development of human resources in the field. Intellectual property protection will also be improved for traditional culture, genetic resources and folk arts.

7. English web site for intellectual property in China

(from China Intelligence Wire International Business Daily, 24 May 2002)

China's state bureau of intellectual property has reported that the bureau's English-language web site has been launched. The web site contains service information. The aim of developing the web site is to enable the bureau to enhance the exchange between the domestic intellectual property industry and overseas intellectual property fields.

8. China accepts 245,000 foreign patent applications

(from Asiainfo Services, 26 & 27 May 2002)

Wang Jingchuan, the director general of Chinese Intellectual Property Bureau said, "The bureau had accepted 245,000 foreign patent application by May 2002. The implementation of Chinese Patent System has created favorable legislative and politics situation for inviting advanced technology and capitals from abroad.

Wang Jingchuan outlines three functions of Chinese Patent System. First, the implementation of Chinese Patent System intensively promotes the enthusiasm of creation and invention. Second, Chinese Patent System has become an important system to develop the applications of creations and inventions. A large number of patents get protection from the system.

HONG KONG

News in May 2002

1. 80 pirated Star Wars DVDs seized in two-day operation
2. Customs 'soft' on publishing piracy

1. 80 pirated Star Wars DVDs seized in two-day operation

(from South China Morning Post, 18 & 16 May 2002)

Eighty pirated copies of the latest Star Wars blockbuster, Attack of the Clones, have been seized by Customs officers. The pirated copies were seized in a two-day crackdown to coincide with the

film's opening worldwide and locally, the Customs and Excise Department said. The DVDs, carrying a price tag of \$35, were manufactured illegally outside Hong Kong and were seized from shops in Sheung Shui and Kwun Tong.

2. Customs 'soft' on publishing piracy
(from Hong Kong Imail, 31 May 2002)

Publisher groups fired a broadside at the Customs and Excise Department saying it was "reluctant" to combat copyright pirates in the publishing sector. Up to HK\$84 million was believed to have been lost to the sector in 2001 through pirated educational books.

Publishers Association director Ian Taylor said he was "shocked and disappointed" about the "deterioration in the past 20 years" and called for the department to get tough on offenders. He said reluctant enforcement and the partial suspension of some copyright legislation had hit publishers hard.

Statistics provided by the Reprographic Rights Licensing Society – the local authority which licenses public access to works with copyright – revealed the loss of revenue from pirated publications for tertiary education was more than HK\$70 million and for secondary school education was HK\$14 million in 2001.

MALAYSIA

News in May 2002

1. Gangster cover for pirated VCD sellers
2. Pirated discs of new 'Star Wars' movie hit Malaysia
3. Producer sets up unit to protect movie from piracy
4. Malaysia to haul pirated VCD distributors to court
5. 'No CD piracy in Malaysia'

1. Gangster cover for pirated VCD sellers
(from New Straits Times Newspaper, Malaysia, 12 May 2002)

Pirated CD and VCD stalls are mushrooming again as traders who are "protected" by gangsters and triads are ignoring the ban on sales in open places. Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said the traders are "more daring" in defying the Government's order last August to restrict the sales of CDs and VCDs to designated premises.

The ban on VCD sales in open places like pasar malam and by the roadside is aimed at curbing piracy and sale of pornographic materials. Muhyiddin said the move was initially successful but traders have returned to the streets with the help of gangsters.

2. Pirated discs of new 'Star Wars' movie hit Malaysia

(from Bangkok Post Newspaper, Business Section, Page 4, Thailand, 14 May 2002

Reuters News Service, 14 May 2002

The Nation Newspaper, Asia Business Section, Page 12B, Thailand, 15 May 2002

The Straits Times Newspaper, Malaysia News Section, Page A8, Singapore, 15 May 2002)

Three days before it opens in cinemas, "Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones" is under threat from real replicas – pirated video discs. Video discs of top Hollywood movies sell for about 5 ringgit in Malaysia, where illegal copying is rampant and sellers operate openly.

Piracy is an increasing problem for movie makers, particularly on the Internet where music and video file sharing programmes are becoming more sophisticated and easier to use. Despite repeated crackdowns, movie and music piracy is rampant in Malaysia, where pirated videodiscs sell for about half the price of a cinema ticket.

3. Producer sets up unit to protect movie from piracy

(from New Straits Times Newspaper, Malaysia, 20 May 2002)

The producer of Gerak Khas The Movie 2, a sequel to the popular cop movie released last year, has set up a "special intelligence unit" to prevent it becoming a victim of piracy. The unit will be working closely with the police to ensure that pirated video compact discs of the soon-to-be-released film do not surface. Its members will check outlets selling VCDs and inform the authorities if they detect pirated copies.

4. Malaysia to haul pirated VCD distributors to court

(from Organisation of Asia-Pacific News Agencies, 29 May 2002)

Distributors of pirated VCDs will now be charged in court because compounding the offence is not a good enough deterrent, a state enforcement director said. Iskandar Halim Sulaiman, head of the northern Perlis state enforcement division of the Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry, said these distributors continued to commit the offence probably because the compounds or fines were too low.

From now on offenders might be charged under the Copyrights Act 1987 for which they could be fined up to RM10,000 or jailed up to three years, or both, for each pirated VCDs seized, he said. This heavier penalty would send the message to them to cease their activities immediately, he told.

5. 'No CD piracy in Malaysia'

(from The Nation Newspaper, Business Section, Page 12B, Thailand, 29 May 2002)

Malaysian Compact Disc (CD) manufacturers said they are not to be blamed for the rampant piracy of software and movies in the region. James Tee, deputy chairman of the Optical Discs Manufacturers Association (Odma) said that most CDs carrying illegal copies of movies, music and software were being sourced from Tanjung Pinang in Indonesia and Hat Yai in Thailand.

An International Intellectual Property Alliance (IIPA) report released at the beginning of the year described the scope of piracy problem in Malaysia as “unacceptable”. A large part of the problem was laid at the feet of Malaysian optical disc manufacturers.

The IIPA report claimed that there was an “enormous excess capacity” for the production of optical media formats for the Malaysian market. It alleged that much of this excess capacity has to devoted to pirated production, largely for export.

The IIPA also said pirated music CDs from Malaysia have been seized in other parts of Asia, as well as in Latin America, Australia, Europe and Africa.

SINGAPORE

News in May 2002

VCDs, DVDs smuggled in baskets of vegetables

(from The Straits Times Newspaper, Home News Section, Page H6, Singapore, 23 May 2002)

The rattan baskets were filled to the brim with cabbage and other leafy greens. But buried underneath were less wholesome stuff: over 9,000 pirated and obscene VCDs and DVDs packed snugly in crisp brown cardboard boxes.

They were smuggled in on a Malaysian lorry bound for Singapore and then handed over to a 35 years old mechanic in Kranfi. Customs Department officials arrested the two as the man was taking the boxes out of the boot and passing them to the woman. A check showed that the 20 boxes contained 9,110 VCDs and DVDs of current blockbusters like Spider Man and Attack of The Clones. Among them were pornographic VCDs.

THE PHILIPPINES

News in May 2002

1. IPO to hold workshop on trademark registration rules
2. Manila stays in US' IPR watch list
3. RP warned of losing US investments on IPR issues
4. NBI seizes fake Honda motorcycles
5. Publishing house raided for pirated programs
6. 62,612 fake undies seized

1. IPO to hold workshop on trademark registration rules

(from Business World, Philippines, 3 May 2002)

The Intellectual Property Office (IPO) of the Philippines, in cooperation with the European Community (EC) and the Office for Harmonization in the Internal Market (OHIM), is organizing the Training Course on International and Regional Trademark Registration Systems and the Workshop on "Filing to Registration Procedures – Trademarks" in Manila which will be held on May 13-14, 2002 and May 16-17, 2002, respectively, at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel, Makati City.

The activities are part of the EC assistance program to help the participating ASEAN countries modernize their IP system. The program is a continuation of an earlier five-year project which ended in 1996. Participating countries include the Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei and Vietnam.

2. Manila stays in US' IPR watch list

(from Business World, Philippines, 7 May 2002)

The United States has retained the Philippines in its Priority Watch List of countries found violating intellectual property rights. This finding is contained in a report released yesterday forming part of an annual review by the US government to determine the "adequacy and effectiveness" of IPR protection among its 72 trading partners.

While legislation meant to implement the country's commitments under a global intellectual property agreement remains slow in coming, enforcement of existing laws to check piracy has "had little deterrent effect on the extraordinary level of copyright piracy", the report further read.

The report cited the following indicators that warranted the Philippines' retention in the priority list: low number of raids, inadequately trained prosecutors, and procedural and judicial delays. Optical disk piracy and trademark counterfeiting, the report read, "continues to increase dramatically."

In particular, the report highlighted the need for a law against the illegal reproduction of optical disks. The Philippine government, however, is not the least surprised with the US government's findings.

3. RP warned of losing US investments on IPR issues

(from Business World, Philippines, 13 May 2002)

A US trade delegation that visited the Philippines last week warned that the Philippines can lose its attractiveness to future US investments if government fails to address a number of issues affecting American business interests.

The warning was triggered by the abolition of a Philippine government Interagency Committee on Intellectual Property Rights (IAC-IPR), the continued policy confusion regarding the

importation of cast-iron hubless pipes from the United States, the ownership issue affecting Nextel Communications Philippines Inc., among other concerns.

4. NBI seizes fake Honda motorcycles

(from Philippine Daily Inquirer, 14 May 2002)

Agents of the National Bureau of Investigation seized in Quezon City last week 36 motorcycles bearing fake Honda brands worth P1 million. NBI officers in charge Germin Nasol said the motorcycle units came from Jincheng-Mitsukoshi Motors Philippines located on E- Rodriguez Sr. Ave., QC.

Honda Philippines earlier complained to the NBI that Jincheng-Mitsukoshi has been importing and distributing motorcycles bearing Honda features. Agents of the intellectual property rights division confirmed that the firm was engaged in selling units whose features are similar to Honda's. The firm's owners are facing charges of violating provisions of the intellectual property rights law.

5. Publishing house raided for pirated programs

(from Business World, Philippines, 21 May 2002)

A major publishing house was raided last week by agents of the NBI for pirated software loaded on its computers. NBI head agent Rafael Z. Ragoz said in a press conference that the agency raided Vibal Publishing House, Inc. after more than three months of surveillance. Mr Ragoz announced this development at the NBI head office in Manila. An estimated P10 million worth of computer hardware and software were confiscated from the publishing company.

Macintosh and Windows-based personal computer compose the 80 units seized by the NBI. These terminals were loaded with unauthorized copies of the Microsoft Office suite, Adobe publishing software and Macromedia computer graphics tools, Mr Ragoz added. BSA counsel Bienvenido A. Marquez III said the three software companies are preparing to file charges against Vibal officials.

6. 62,612 fake undies seized

(from Philippine Daily Inquirer, 23 May 2002)

NBI agents confiscated P1 million worth of underwear bearing fake signature trademarks, including Tommy Hilfiger, in Pasay City. NBI Deputy Director Fermin N. Nasol said his men confiscated 62,612 pieces of fake underwear when they raided last week several shops.

Lawyer Rafael Ragoz, chief of the NBI said his men watched the suspected shops and, after buying items from them, confirmed that the shops were indeed selling underwear with fake signature brands. The businessmen would be charged in court with violating the country's Intellectual Property Code.

INDONESIA

News in May 2002

250,000 pirated, pornographic VCDs destroyed in Jakarta
(from Antara, 14 May 2002)

The West Jakarta Police destroyed 250,000 pirated and pornographic VCDs, burning them in a place not far from the Glodok shopping center. Glodok is known for selling pirated VCDs. Of the total number of VCDs destroyed, 117,437 of them were pirated, West Jakarta Police Chief, Senior Commissioner Iwan Ismed, said.

Over the past 30 days, about 1.6 million pirated and pornographic VCDs were confiscated from two pirated VCD makers in Tangerang and Jakarta. The US government has recently put Indonesia in its watch list of violators of intellectual property rights.

VIETNAM

News in May 2002

1. US warns Hanoi on intellectual property
2. HCM City – largest pirated CD & VCD outlet raided
3. Seminar on Property Rights opens in Hanoi
4. Local enterprises asked to register for trademark protection abroad
5. Intellectual property rights discussed

1. US warns Hanoi on intellectual property
(from Reuters News Service, 7 May 2002)

Just months after its historic trade agreement with former enemy Vietnam has taken effect, Washington has warned Hanoi it risks retaliation if it fails to act against rampant intellectual property rights violations.

Assistant US Trade Representative Jon Huntsman told reporters after meetings with Vietnamese officials in Hanoi that Vietnam was already on a Washington's "301 watch list" for such violations announced last week. "If improvements are not forthcoming, that will probably be downgraded," he said. Washington's trade watch list singles out copyright violators and could mean trade retaliation against Vietnam in future.

He said Vietnam had made "reasonably good progress" in drawing up laws to protect intellectual property and had agreed under the trade pact to patent and trade mark compliance within 12 months and on copyright and trade marks within 18 months. "They know that not only is it an

important step in our overall bilateral relationship, but it also sets them up for WTO membership, which they...have high hopes for by 2005.”

2. HCM City - Largest pirated CD & VCD outlet raided

(from Vietnam News Brief Service, 9 May 2002)

Cultural inspectors in Ho Chi Minh City in southern Vietnam confiscated over 40,000 illegally duplicated CDs and VCDs from Nui Vang, the biggest pirated store in the city.

Vice chief Inspector of the city Culture and Information Service Nguyen Thanh Tong admitted that the current level of fines do not discourage the traders from giving up their business. The maximum fine for violators is only \$662. Many cases are transferred to investigative bureaus but do not go further or, if they do, do not result in prosecution, he said.

At present, around 10,000 agents are licensed to trade products from the State-owned film import-export and distribution giant, Fafilm Vietnam, but in reality most enrich themselves by selling pirates. Many local cultural services and even Fafilm Vietnam have had to discipline their staff for selling films prior to being censored or distributed for a commission.

An official from Fafilm Vietnam warned that copyright violation not only cause losses to the State budget but also dishearten foreign investors who are seeking opportunities in film production and distribution.

3. Seminar on Property Rights opens in Hanoi

(from Vietnam News Brief Service, 14 May 2002)

Protecting intellectual property rights in Vietnam remains a pressing issue due to its impact on both national socio-economic benefits and individual rights, asserted the Minister of Justice Nguyen Dinh Loc during his speech at a seminar called “Asian Intellectual Property: the Practical Situation and Orientation for the Future”, being held on May 13-15 in Hanoi.

He also said that the seminar, co-held by the Vietnam-France Law Association and the National Industrial Property Institute, would provide Vietnamese economists and entrepreneurs with more knowledge about the rights and their impact on international economic integration.

The workshop, with presence of over 300 participants, will also discuss other sensitive issue such as globalisation, the application of regulations on property rights and the benefits of intellectual, industrial, literary and artistic property rights.

4. Local enterprises asked to register for trademark protection abroad

(from Saigon Times Daily, 27 May 2002)

Xinhua News Agency Bulletin, 29 May 2002)

In the face of illegal registration by entities abroad of famous Vietnamese trademarks, such as Trung Nguyen coffee, Saigon beer and Vinataba cigarettes, the Ministry of Trade has called on

local companies to register their trademarks for protection abroad, especially key export markets such as the US, EU, Japan and ASEAN.

5. Intellectual property rights discussed

(from Vietnam News Brief Service, 28 May 2002)

Intellectual property protection in Vietnam still faces various obstacles, particularly the lack of experts and experience in solving disputes and violations, admitted the Deputy Head of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment at a seminar on May 27-28.

Co-held by the National Office of Industrial Property and the Swiss Intellectual Property Institute, the seminar also introduces the importance of such rights, general international rules, the State's management role and the experiences of other countries, including Switzerland.
