

No joking matter

Lin Zhenguang, who tapped illegally into a neighbour's wireless network to make a bomb hoax posting online, pleads guilty.

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THE STRAITS TIMES THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 1 2007



MOST UNFAVOURABLE IP ENVIRONMENT



War on fakes goes digital as S'pore targets online pirates

Survey ranks nation among top 10 countries in anti-piracy effort

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Crime Correspondent

SINGAPORE, already relentless on those who hawk fakes on the streets, has been stepping up action against online peddlers too.

Last week, police charged a 31-year-old man who tried to sell fake Calvin Klein jeans through the Internet. He is now remanded.

Last month, a 24-year-old woman was jailed for six months for trying to sell fake Gucci, Chanel and Luis Vuitton items online. She is now serving a six-month jail term.

In the last two years, the authorities have seized some \$29.65 million worth of fakes and conducted 432 raids against copyright and trademark infringements.

The country's tough crackdown on fake goods and online piracy has made an international impact, as seen in a global survey released on Monday.

The survey, by the Paris-based International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), placed Singapore among the top 10 best-performing countries in addressing counterfeiting and piracy.

Singapore was ranked ninth. The only other Asian country on the 29-country list was Japan in fifth.

The top four countries on the list are the United States, Britain, Germany and France.

The ICC's inaugural survey - ahead of a meeting of chief executive officers in Geneva - attributed government enforcement efforts as the most needed factor in the anti-piracy drive.

The survey also puts China and

Russia, followed by India, atop a separate list of 53 countries seen as the most serious offenders against intellectual property protection.

Conducted by the ICC's Business Action to Stop Counterfeiting and Piracy initiative, the study polled some 48 companies spanning 27 product categories, including many global players.

Survey respondents placed a premium on enforcement efforts - when compared to other options such as legislation or public education - as the area that would best yield results.

The ICC wants the survey to become an annual exercise in the global war against piracy - which, it warned, has become a substantial drain on business and has led to tax revenue and job loss.

Industry players in Singapore lauded the survey as due recognition of the strong anti-piracy enforcement stance here against street and online piracy.

Recording Industry Association (Singapore) chief executive Edward Neubronner gave kudos to enforcement agencies here such as the Intellectual Property Rights Branch, the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority and the police for their zero-tolerance policy against piracy.

Intellectual property rights lawyer M. Ravindran said Singapore has come a long way since the late 1980s, when fake goods were openly sold in malls such as Lucky Plaza.

"Today, this is no longer the case, and you

don't see counterfeits being sold in permanent retail outlets. Generally, counterfeits may be found in makeshift stalls.

"Singapore could emerge as an Asian model for its enforcement efforts, and as it now grapples with online piracy," he added.

Intellectual Property Office of Singapore (Ipos) director-general Liew Woon Yin said the Singapore IP regulator is committed to a strong and dynamic IP regime here.

The Ipos strategy has been to constantly review the IP regime to keep pace with "evolving technological advance-

ments and the latest global developments", she said.

Mr Neubronner stressed the key role of Ipos in educating the public - one of the success factors for countries on the survey's top 10 list.

"The challenge for the authorities now is to keep out Net piracy, which is critical for content industries like music and motion pictures."

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Campaign to focus on dangers of Net piracy

THIS year's anti-piracy public education efforts will focus on raising awareness of the perils of online piracy.

Students and professionals will be among the key groups targeted in the campaign.

The campaign, which is expected to roll out in April, will also see the celebration of World IP (Intellectual Property) Day, said Ms Liew Woon Yin, director-general of the Intellectual Property Office of Singapore (Ipos).

The authorities here want to promote a "piracy-free" lifestyle and are working on a wide range of outreach and contact

programmes. "A strong intellectual property regime needs the support of an IP-savvy culture," said Ms Liew.

One initiative by Ipos is the formation of the Honour Intellectual Property (HIP) Alliance comprising government agencies, IP industry associations and private enterprises.

She said: "Calling for people to 'Live for Real', HIP hopes to bring about a generation of firm believers who will respect IP and live a piracy-free lifestyle."

She added that the IP crusade has already signed on more than 7,000 members who pledged a piracy-free lifestyle.

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