

OICCI Launches 2nd Edition of IPR Manual amidst Law Enforcement Concerns

Karachi, April 29: The Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OICCI), a collective body of over 200 top foreign investors has launched second edition of its IPR Manual 'Evolution of Intellectual Property Rights in Pakistan: OICCI Perspective (Edition 2)' on Monday.

Speaking at the event, Farukh Amil, Chairman of the Intellectual Property Organization of Pakistan (IPOP), stated that "Intellectual Property is directly linked to development in numerous ways and is a critical tool for empowerment." He emphasized the necessity for grassroots awareness of the potential of IP, starting as early as at the school level. "The younger generation absolutely must be in step with global knowledge and standards."

The objective of the publication is to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the various aspects of IPR laws in Pakistan for the facilitation of investors and innovators. The manual will benefit foreign and local investors understanding of the IPR regime in Pakistan, providing useful IPR related guidelines for law students and practitioners, regulators and people interested in fostering the culture of innovation and inventions.

In his remarks, M Abdul Aleem, CE/Secretary General of the OICCI said that "Effective protection of intellectual property rights [IPR] is essential for attracting and retaining FDI [Foreign Direct Investment]. According to the OICCI IPR Survey 2023, infringements resulted in a loss of up to Rs800 billion to the national exchequer last year alone. Companies too reported a total loss of 20% of their turnover due to these infringements."

Usman Javed Altaf, group director (Legal & Intellectual Property), Martin Dow, added that, "These infringements also harm consumers, who may be unknowingly purchasing counterfeit or substandard products, posing risks to their health and safety." He noted that the Intellectual Property Organization of Pakistan (IPOP) must engage with law enforcement agencies (LEAs) to bolster enforcement efforts.

The OICCI members believe that while there is comprehensive IPR legislation in place, there is a need for a more robust enforcement of IPR, where IPOP could play a key role in ensuring that the LEAs ensure strict IPR enforcement.

Besides speedy court trials, harsh penalties are needed to create a deterrent amongst IPR violators. Moreover, it is recommended to improve the IPR capability of LEAs and judiciary and create an awareness in the society using the media effectively.

Aman Ghanchi, Executive Director Legal and Company Secretary Unilever Pakistan, added that "Effective use of media is crucial to raise mass awareness and protect both customer interests and government revenue streams."

Innovators and foreign investors give high priority to an effective IPR regime in Pakistan, which is critical for attracting FDI and promoting research and innovation in the economy. The OICCI, in its interactions with ministries, government officials, academia and media, has been actively promoting an IPR-friendly environment and has led the debate on the protection and strict enforcement of the IPR regime.

Its latest publication is an updated edition of similar last publication released in February 2019. OICCI has added two new chapters on Plant Breeders Rights and Geographical Indications in this 2023-2024 edition of the OICCI IPR Manual. The Chamber has also updated chapters relating to Trademarks, Patents, Copyrights, Designs and Enforcement of IPR to respect latest developments in these critical areas.