

World IP Day 2017 Celebration in Thailand

On 26th April 2017, the United States Patent and Trademark Office and the Embassy of the United States in Bangkok held a seminar to celebrate the 2017 World Intellectual Property Day centered around this year's theme – “Innovation: Improving Lives”.

The seminar began with an impressive opening remark by Mr. Peter Haymond, the Deputy Chief of Mission of the US Embassy in Bangkok, focusing on how important the protection of the intellectual property is for Thailand and ASEAN. He pinpointed that it is essential to respect and protect intellectual property rights to foster creativity and encourage innovations which will improve our lives, such as life-saving, advanced medicines.

There were two panel discussions. The first was about the importance of innovation to the development of a nation's economy and the second focused on how intellectual property system drives and motivates inventors to create inventions that improve lives.

The first panel discussion was really engaging featuring with representatives from the government and private sectors, and the ESCAP of the United Nations. Ms. Siraprapha Rungpry, the project manager of the National Innovation Agency, said that creativity and innovation is really the key for the transformation to innovation-based or value-based economy under the government policy of Thailand 4.0. All relevant public and private sectors are to work together to create the appropriate environment for inventors, creators and investors to encourage and facilitate the creation of new ideas or innovations. She added that the government is aware of the problem of the large backlogs of patent and trademark applications and trying to solve the problem and make the registration process faster and more efficient.

Mr. Jonathan Wong, the regional adviser of the UNESCAP, gave India as one of the great examples of how government supports and facilitates the protection of IPRs and drives its economy to grow so fast. He said that the mindset and culture of people in the country is really important and the government should play an active role in putting a proper mindset in place by way of education. He said that innovative and creative ideas cannot grow without knowing how they are valuable for economy and development of society. He added that we have to accept that there are many challenges to overcome in transforming the country to a knowledge-based economy, but at least we know that we are on the right direction.

Mr. Brendan Hanley, IP Counsel for Southeast Asia of Western Digital said that he believes that everybody has inherent ability to be creative and innovative, but it is about how each of us can develop an idea and bring it to the real practice. He raised the issue that educating employees in a company about intellectual property is a must and encouraging innovative ideas within a company is very beneficial. Innovation can start from a very simple idea and grow to be a complex one after being groomed and developed.

The second panel discussion was featured with Thai investors from universities and government agency. They discussed on how intellectual property system drives and motivates inventors to create inventions that improve lives. Each of the panelists have created quite impressive patents and copyrights. Dr. Sirirat Jitkarnka from Chulalongkorn University said that every researcher and inventor is eager to create more innovation as it is his/her job and expertise. However, the problem of lack of fund for R&D and lack of an efficient platform for researchers and inventors to commercialize their inventions has created an obstacle for inventors. Dr. Jessada Wannasin from Prince of Songkla University added that the problem of backlog of patent applications is also one of the biggest issues which should be solved really soon since technology grows so fast and at the time when a patent is granted, the invention may be already out-dated or copied. Dr. Alisa Kongthon, Head of Speech and Audio Technology Lab of National Electronics and Computer Technology Center (NECTEC), said that in fact, Thai researchers and inventors have ability to create more innovations and if the government provides more support to R&D and creates an encouraging and facilitating environment and platform, we will be able to reach the goal of transforming Thailand to an innovation-based economy.

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