

30/08/1999

## Stiffer laws against producers of pirated CDs

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - A more stringent set of laws which provides a minimum fine of RM500,000 is being proposed for those caught producing pirated optical discs.

Once implemented, it will remove, once and for all, the notion that pirated CDs, VCDs, and DVDs originate from Malaysia.

"We do not need such a reputation," said a Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry officer in an interview with the New Straits Times today.

The proposed legislation, to be tabled in the next sitting of Parliament in October, will be called the "Optical Disc Licencing Bill 1999". It will also provide a minimum of RM1 million fine for repeat offenders.

Individual offenders will be slapped with a minimum fine of RM250,000 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years or both if found guilty for the illegal production of compact discs, audio compact discs, CD-ROM, Digital Video Discs, DVD-ROM, Laser Discs, Mini-Discs and Video Compact Discs.

Frequent offenders will have to pay a minimum fine of RM500,000 or face a custodial sentence of not more than six years, or both.

Modelled after Hong Kong's Prevention of Copyright Ordinance 1998, the new law will help the authorities combat piracy more effectively.

Hong Kong had introduced a similar law after it was billed as among the top producers of pirated optical discs.

The official said under the proposal, the Ministry would be the licensing body to regulate the use of machines in the production of CDs.

It will require all disc manufacturers to obtain a licence before they are allowed to run the optical discs manufacturing plants.

"They will also be required to submit a consent letter or valid copyright document from the copyright owner on the number of discs to be produced by them," she said.

The proposed law would complement the Copyright Act 1987 which did not allow officials to seize or seal any machine used to produce pirated optical discs.

(Under the present laws, such machines come under the purview of the International Trade and Industry Ministry.)

The provisions in the proposed legislation would enable the Ministry officials to seize machines used in producing the CDs.

The main machines used to produce optical discs are the replicator and the moulder which cost more than RM1 million.

"The proposed provisions will also enable us to detect and control the entry of the machine components," she said, adding that the conditions in the licence would require producers to reveal where their machines were and their use.

At present, there are 17 VCD and DVD plants in Malaysia, all licensed by the Malaysia Industrial Development Authority. In 1997, eight licences were issued compared with one in 1996 and four in 1995.

However, many illegal plants have mushroomed over the past year, producing pirated VCDs and DVDs for the local and export market.

She said it was vital for the country to deal with the menace as many parties had the impression that a big number of pirated CDs, VCDs, and DVDs, originated from Malaysia.

The formulation of such a law was first discussed during the Seventh Multimedia Super Corridor meeting in March when Prime Minister Datuk Seri

Dr Mahathir Mohamad asked the participants to come up with a law to fight piracy of optical discs.

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