

World Intellectual Property Day Celebrated in Yangon

On 26 April 2018, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Intellectual Property Proprietors' Association, Myanmar (IPPAM) jointly organized the ceremony to celebrate World Intellectual Property Day at Mingalar Hall, Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) office. IPPAM was formed in 2013 with 25 committee members. Its mission is to share knowledge on intellectual property (IP), protect IP rights, and raise IP awareness in Myanmar.

The theme of the ceremony to celebrate World Intellectual Property Day was “Powering Change: Women in Innovation and Creativity.” It was mainly attended by Myanmar businesses and also by U Tin Maung Tun, Chairman of the Yangon Region Parliament, who gave a speech acknowledging the important role of women. He expressed his appreciation for “Tree Food” products, which is produced by innovative female entrepreneurs in Myanmar, while also noting that women in innovation and creativity play a fundamental part in national economic development. U Tin Maung Tun encouraged innovators and creators to organize more workshops on intellectual property for SMEs in Myanmar to promote further development in line with intellectual property rules.

- Myanmar will soon have an Intellectual Property (IP) Law to Protect Local and Foreign Investors

U Zaw Min Win, Chairman of UMFCCI, delivered the opening remarks, outlining how the world has transformed from a market economy, to a knowledge based economy, to a digital economy. At the moment, Myanmar does not have an intellectual property (IP) law, which makes foreign investors hesitant to invest in Myanmar. However, the government has been working on an IP law and intends to implement it as soon as possible to (1) protect producers and investors; (2) promote intellectual property rights (patents, trademark, industrial designs, copyrights); and (3) promote the role of intellectual property rights in encouraging innovation and creativity. World Intellectual Property Day is celebrated annually on 26 April worldwide to increase public awareness on IP, and to encourage learning on the importance of intellectual property rights in stimulating innovation and creativity. In addition, UMFCCI has also been organizing seminars and training on intellectual property with the support of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIP) since 2010.

The Ministry of Education (Science and Technology), Myanmar, has drafted new IP Laws in collaboration with the Union Attorney General Office and other related ministries based on (1) TRIPS (Trade- Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights); (2) IP Laws of ASEAN Member States; and (3) WIPO Conventions and Treaties, which is now pending approval from the Union Parliament level for implementation. If the new laws are approved, the new Myanmar Intellectual Property rights will be more efficient in protecting the rights of IP owners. However,

Myanmar needs a comprehensive and effective IP protection system to promote foreign investment and technology transfer, as well as boosting industrial development. Strengthening the protection of intellectual property rights in Myanmar will be a catalyst for economic growth, encouraging foreign direct investment and helping the country reap rewards in terms of greater domestic innovation and increased spread of technology in the long run. Myanmar also needs technical assistance on setting up the IP infrastructure in Myanmar, and is ready to collaborate with local and international organizations.

- Myanmar women entrepreneurs are having an increasing economic role and constitute potential business partners for foreign investors

The above opening speeches were followed by speeches from Ms. Alyce Abdalla, Economic Bureau Chief of the U.S. Embassy in Yangon, and U Kyaw Kyaw Win, Chairman of IPPAM. Both expected the IP law to come into effect soon. U Kyaw Kyaw Win informed that the draft of the IP law is now pending the examination of the Union Parliament. In line with the theme of the ceremony, he was pleased that successful businesswomen will share knowledge on doing business with creativity and innovation. He believes that women's efforts in innovation and creativity will contribute towards national economic development. Following U Kyaw Kyaw Win's speech, Daw Tin Ohmar Tun, Vice Chairman of IPPAM, read out the Director of WIPO's message for World Intellectual Property Day 2018.

The ceremony then proceeded on to a seminar with presentations and discussions on various topics. Dr. Cho Lei Aung, Founder of "Tree Food" presented on "Motivation of an Entrepreneurial Spirit." She shared her passion to showcase Myanmar traditions and culture, and enthusiasm to create products that are made in Myanmar. In this endeavor, she created the candy "jaffery," which is produced in small pieces, and has been adjusted for taste. She has been inspired to produce different flavours with packaging that is more reusable and recyclable to attract customers. Dr. Cho Lei Aung had to motivate herself given the many difficulties in her life.

Prof. Dr. Khin Mar Yee, from the Department of Law, Yangon University, presented on "Women Rights and Innovation." Her presentation included fundamental human rights laws, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Women's rights are the rights and entitlement of all girls and women worldwide, and formed the basis of the women's rights movement in the 19th century, and the feminist movement in the 20th century. Women working in innovation constitute a community of women with big ideas that transform the way we live and work. Prof. Dr. Khin Mar Yee ended her presentation by highlighting female investors worldwide and the five outstanding women entrepreneurs in Myanmar.

Dr. Thiri Thein Kyaw, Secretary General of the Myanmar Cosmetics Association/Executive Director of Nature's Story Trading Co., Ltd., presented on "The Outcomes of Innovation." She emphasized that all women have strength not only in innovation

and creativity, but also in collecting information. During the presentation, she shared her experiences, three video clips on the Amazon e-commerce company that inspired her retail business and how to make outstanding business.

In addition, Mr. Seth Hays, Chief Representative of the International Trademark Association (INTA), introduced the Association, whose professionals are dedicated to supporting trademarks and IP to foster consumer trust, economic growth, and innovation. There are now a dozen members in Myanmar. Ms. Cormon, Corporate Member of INTA, presented on “The Role of IP in Driving Business Growth.” She briefed about IP as an asset to stimulate the creation of products and services, to generate ideas and more intellectual property. IP plays an important role in facilitating the transfer of innovative technology to the market place.

➤ Discussions on Myanmar’s Film Industry: A Potential Area for Collaboration with Foreign Investors

The following panel discussion was moderated by Daw Swe Zin Htike, Vice Chairman of IPPAM. Speakers included Daw Khine Khine Oo, Secretary General of IPPAM, Daw Thu ThuShein, Documentary Film Director, and Daw Christina Kee, Film Director. The panelists discussed the theme of “Power Change: Women in Innovation and Creativity.” They explored innovation and creativity in the film industry and how it is different from other industries. For example, how does the law protect the copyrights of intellectual property? The moderator then led the discussion on the practice of contracts on the live performances at Wathan film festival, and how the speakers built their motivation, and created their live stories to inspire the audience. The moderator and speakers also discussed the current situation of Myanmar’s film industry, how they can promote Myanmar’s film industry, and difficulties in showing films at local cinemas despite the ease in showing them abroad.

➤ IPPAM as a focal point for IP in Myanmar, and its mission to promote and protect IP

U Kyaw Kyaw Win, Chairman of IPPAM, then gave the closing remarks to conclude the ceremony. He acknowledged the role of IPPAM, and once again acknowledged IPPAM’s mission to share IP knowledge, protect IP rights, and raise IP awareness in Myanmar. In brief, IPPAM organized the World Intellectual Property Day ceremony with the support of USAID to encourage individuals and businesses, and to empower women to innovate and create intellectual property. The event was successful and well attended by over 200 participants. Some products of successful entrepreneurs and SME business owners were also displayed at the ceremony to showcase success stories, and to encourage more creativity and innovation.

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