China unveils IPR strategy
Correspondents in Beijing
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CHINA has unveiled a national strategy aimed at beefing up intellectual property rights (IPR) protections even as pirated versions of latest Hollywood blockbusters like 'Troy' and 'Shrek 2' were available in Beijing stores. It normally only takes days for Chinese pirates to get versions of the latest Hollywood releases into the shops despite the repeatedly stated determination of the government to crackdown on the practice.

In an effort to beef up existing schemes to protect IPR, the government has put in place a new national strategy which will begin with an education campaign, Zhang Qin, deputy commissioner of the State Intellectual Property Office, told the China Daily.

"The national IPR strategy will include an educational programme to deepen IPR knowledge among officials of ministerial and provincial levels," the newspaper said.

Foreign companies and governments are becoming increasingly frustrated with the continuing problems of piracy and counterfeiting in China, which leads to billions of dollars of losses each year.

In his annual report on the practices of its main trading partners, US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick in April criticised China for failing to protect IPR, saying enforcement of relevant laws was "seriously inadequate".

Despite periodic campaigns, "counterfeiting and piracy remain rampant", the report said.

The US estimates the value of counterfeit goods in China at $US19-24 billion, with losses to US companies exceeding $US1.8 billion a year.

One of China's commitments to the World Trade Organisation is that intellectual property rights have to be better protected.

Yet despite the public destruction of DVDs and CDS, piracy and other IPR infringements remain rampant, with not just fake music and video discs readily available but all manner of brand-named goods.

Agence France-Presse

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