

“ A TOAST TO A UNIQUE SINGAPORE.”

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Food for Thought

Just as food sustains our physical being, it is imagination and innovation that feeds our higher existence. From the invention of the wheel to the advent of space travel, the world was changed through ingenious ideas translated into useful applications, bringing progress and prosperity to all.

Intellectual property (IP) systems reward the intellectual effort in bringing ideas to market. They protect the business space in which an enterprise may commercially exploit its innovative products and services. Like food is to our survival, IP has become the lifeblood of modern business. Whether it is brand identity, cutting edge technology that drives products, novel design of appearance, creative marketing collaterals or special know-how that puts everything together, IP protection is essential for business sustainability. IP is what distinguishes an enterprise in the marketplace and makes its offerings unique.

Singapore – A Unique Offering

The rapid globalisation of business, the outbreak of SARS and the threat of terrorism have changed forever the landscape in which we operate. The past few years have been tumultuous times for Singapore but we rode out the storm and emerged more resilient. Our efforts at restructuring the economy to leverage on more IP-rich activities are starting to bear fruit. R & D activities are increasing



and breaking new ground; our companies are investing in branding and going international; and our media industry is steadily growing in stature.

In this context, the Singapore Tourism Board's new destination tagline, "Uniquely Singapore" is spot-on. Not only is it an appropriate proposition for tourists, it accurately describes our unique offering as a compelling location for the conduct of IP business.

Putting Quality Ingredients Together

Singapore has been consistently ranked as one of the most competitive nations and best places for business in the world. A key ingredient to Singapore's recipe for success is in the quality IP infrastructure which the Intellectual Property Office of Singapore (IPOS) has helped to put in place.

According to the Global Competitiveness Report published by the World Economic Forum, Singapore's annual international IP protection rank has improved consistently from 15th in 2001, to 12th in 2002, and now to 8th in 2003. In 2003, Singapore was rated the most IP protective country in Asia for the second time in two consecutive years by the Political & Economic Risk Consultancy (PERC).

In FY 03, as part of ongoing efforts to constantly improve upon our IP regime, IPOS spearheaded changes to Singapore's IP legislation. The Trade Marks Amendment Rules 2003 allow online applications for recordal of assignments and amendments to be made to trademark applications. A series of Patents Amendment Rules 2003 were also introduced to streamline and simplify filing procedures. IPOS also conducted a wide and comprehensive review of the IP laws which dovetailed with the implementation of obligations under the United States-Singapore Free Trade Agreement.

Good Harvest

In 2003, the number of registrable IP in force grew by 18.91 percent over 2002. The same year saw a growth of 0.32 percent in the number of patent filings by Singapore-based companies as well as a growth of 7.49 percent in the number of Trade Marks and Designs applications filed in Singapore despite the general economic downturn.

Getting a Piece of the Global Pie

In FY 03, IPOS continued to strengthen co-operation and exchange with other IP offices in key markets to facilitate access for our companies venturing into those markets. IPOS signed a MOU with the European Patent Office and another with the State Intellectual Property Office of the People's Republic of China to foster stronger ties and collaboration between the respective offices.

To profile Singapore in the international IP arena, IPOS organised two international conferences in collaboration with key partners during the financial year – the IP and Biological Resources Conference in December 2003 and the Europe-Asia Patent Information Conference II in March 2004.

IPOS was also actively leading negotiations for the IP chapters of the Korea-Singapore Free Trade Agreement, the Pacific Three Free Trade Agreement (between Chile, New Zealand and Singapore), the India Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement and the Jordan-Singapore Free Trade Agreement.

Grooming IP Cooks & Connoisseurs

At home, IPOS continued to strengthen its networks and programmes to grow awareness and capabilities in IP. The HIP (Honour Intellectual Property) Alliance, IPOS' flagship public awareness initiative,

expanded its reach by embarking on a year-long publicity campaign featuring a popular local TV character, former VCD pirate made good, Russell Koh to champion its "Live for REAL" anti-piracy message.

To ensure that we engage our youth early in the understanding of IP, we set up iperckidz, an initiative for the school sector which takes participants through a fun and interactive learning journey using IP concepts. Fronting this programme is Detective IP, our very own IP icon with the maxim, "Be curious! Investigate IP!"

For the business sector, IPOS developed a national IP management programme called SCOPE IP (Strategies for Creation, Ownership, Protection and Exploitation of Intellectual Property). Under this programme, IPOS made available a handy and practical online self-assessment diagnostic tool, to help companies identify their own IP portfolio, and examine if they have a proper system to manage their stock of IP.

Preparing for A Feast

For FY 04, IPOS will be in the throes of implementing IP law changes pursuant to the extensive review of our IP regime. They include new plant variety protection laws and legislative amendments covering patents, trademarks, copyright, industrial designs and layout designs of integrated circuits. The last of the law changes are expected to be in force by January 2005. Along with the law changes, we would also be mounting a public campaign targeting both consumers and businesses to increase their awareness on the benefits and other implications of the new laws. All these will provide greater impetus to Singapore's growth as a knowledge-based and innovation-driven economy.

Cooking It Right

Quality ingredients, seasoned with distinctive flavours, cooked just right and served with flourish – that's our "Uniquely Singapore" IP proposition. This would have been impossible without teamwork. IPOS is grateful for the invaluable support from public sector agencies like A*STAR (Agency for Science, Technology and Research), EDB (Economic Development Board), IE (International Enterprise) Singapore, SPRING Singapore (Standards, Productivity and Innovation Board), MDA (Media Development Authority), IDA (Infocomm Development Authority), Intellectual Property Rights Branch of the Singapore Police Force and ICA (Immigration and Checkpoints Authority) as well as IP champions from private sector towards this end.

Many thanks also to the Board of Directors for your valuable contributions in steering IPOS in its efforts and of course, my deepest appreciation to the staff at IPOS for another year of outstanding achievements.

Bon Appetit!

Food is to be celebrated and enjoyed. So too, our precious ideas. With this scrumptious serving of our annual report, we wish all good health and prosperity as we continue to be "Uniquely Singapore". Cheers!



Professor Hang Chang Chieh
Chairman
Intellectual Property Office of Singapore



“ OUR JOB IS TO WHET THE APPETITE.”

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

Eating to Live, Living to Eat

Food is a national obsession for us. Whether you are eating to live or living to eat, there is something for everyone. From fine dining to fast food, renowned restaurants to boisterous bistros, popular food courts to neighbourhood coffee shops – it is food galore at the heart of Singapore. The gastronomic setting of this year’s annual report is more than just appetising, it is strategic. Our aspiration is to make intellectual property (IP) a national obsession for Singapore. We want you all to eat, sleep and live IP.

Delivering Good Food

In our third year championing IP for Singapore, we were kept very busy with an extensive law review to strengthen our IP regime; staying lean in operation while improving service levels by delivering more online services; and extending the reach and depth of our awareness and capability building programmes.

Setting the Table

Singapore is constantly upgrading its IP regime to better align with the world’s best practices. The historic signing of the United States-Singapore Free Trade Agreement by Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong and US President George W. Bush on 6 May 2003 was a key milestone in Singapore’s economic growth strategy. Singapore will be

introducing new IP laws that are benchmarked against some of the best in the world. They would encourage entrepreneurship, investment, job creation and growth in our own technology, science and creative industries as well as set the stage for Singapore's emergence as a global IP hub.

Engaging Stakeholders

To prepare the ground, IPOS set up an IP Taskforce to engage the business community on the new IP laws that would soon be introduced in FY 04. The Taskforce, comprising key representatives from both the public and private sectors, act as a platform for businesses and the Government to exchange ideas about tapping the business potential of IP and benefiting from the proposed law changes. The Taskforce, together with IPOS, facilitated seminars and conferences to educate the business and professional sectors on the proposed legislative changes. A dedicated website www.newiplaws.org.sg was set up as a resource to keep businesses on the progress of the law changes.

Staying Lean

As a self-financing statutory board, it is imperative that decision makers are aware of the economic cost impact of the programmes and their alternatives. This ensures that IPOS continues to deliver maximum value from its resources. To this end, in FY 03, IPOS successfully implemented the NEV (or Net Economic Value) programme. This has provided for a better understanding of the true economic cost of IPOS' operations through the rank and file and enabled staff to come up with more strategic, cost effective solutions as a result.

Providing More

In FY 03, IPOS made application for IP protection more efficient and convenient to users by making

more services available online. Users may now conduct trade mark searches in the comfort of their homes or offices through eTrademarks, IPOS' online Trade Mark system. ePatents was also further enhanced to allow more patent forms to be electronically submitted. Users can also look forward to a new eDesigns system in FY 04.

Receiving Recognition

Our efforts at improving our service levels did not go unnoticed. IPOS earned the accolade of "Smart Organisation" at the inaugural MIS (Management Information Strategies) Innovation Awards 2003. Harnessing technology to make quantum leaps in service standards and productivity, IPOS' Trade Marks System was picked as a winner from over 90 nominations from across Asia after a rigorous evaluation process by a panel of 25 judges.

Whetting Appetites

For FY 03, we continued to deepen our connection with our various target audiences with interactive tools and programmes to make them "hungry" for IP.

There were broad-based public awareness initiatives like the HIP Alliance's year-long anti-piracy campaign - "The REAL thing is the Right thing", and brainWave, Singapore's first reality television show on IP.

Reaching out to the school sector, iperckidz, our one-stop resource for teachers and students organized many interesting programmes including an inaugural national trade mark competition and an IP camp to help students create their own IP training kits for their peers.

For businesses, we launched SCOPE - IP (or Strategies for the Creation, Ownership, Protection

and Exploitation of IP), a national IP Management framework to help them adopt best practices in IP.

Not forgetting the public sector, IPOS, together with the Ministry of Law, published a guidebook on managing IP to help raise awareness about the IP issues in the public sector. A new policy which encourages a “contractor ownership” model for the IP created in procurement contracts while securing the necessary rights to the government to ensure optimal operational value will be effective in FY 04.

What's Next

For FY 04, we will have our work cut out for us. Besides ensuring adequate consultation and the timely passage of new IP laws, there are enhancements to internal systems and extensive education efforts to be undertaken. The impending law changes, especially in the area of enhancements to the Copyright regime, will have significant impact for consumers and businesses alike. We will therefore be launching, in collaboration with the IP Taskforce and other industry IP champions, a holistic advertising campaign targeting both sectors to ensure that the right message is communicated.

Come What May

In the area of IP, there is always a surprise round the corner. This is so because IP is driven by creativity and innovation and with these, there can be no static state. No doubt as IPOS seeks to carry out its mission, many challenges loom ahead but then so do many opportunities. Come what may, we are confident of managing the task well – thanks to the strong stewardship of our Board, our affiliates and industry partners for their generous support and all our staff for their dedication and passion.

Treat Yourself

We all know food is good for us. It is time we realised that IP is equally good, if not better. Work up an appetite for IP. Treat yourself and indulge!



Liew Woon Yin

Director-General

Intellectual Property Office of Singapore