

Traffic Fines May Go Up in Oman

Abu-Ghazaleh: ASIP Launches Famous Arab Trademarks Initiative, Establishes Association for Protecting Owners of Trademarks

Three Draft Laws Introduced in the FNC of Emirates



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IN THIS ISSUE



1

Traffic Fines May Go Up in Oman



4

Customs Agents Foil Captagon Smuggling Attempt



2

UK Signs FATCA International Tax Compliance Agreement with the US



4

Three Draft Laws Introduced in the FNC of Emirates



3

Abu-Ghazaleh: ASIP Launches Famous Arab Trademarks Initiative, Establishes Association for Protecting Owners of Trademarks



6

India: Balancing Public and Private Interests in the IP Regime



Where We Operate ?



Traffic Fines May Go Up in Oman

MUSCAT - In an effort to check escalating number of road accidents, the Royal Oman Police (ROP) is seriously mulling over increasing the existing traffic fines, shortening the period of payment from yearly to monthly and awarding black marks in one's driving record.

Brigadier Mohammed bin Awadh al Rowas, director-general of Traffic of ROP, said plans to increase fines are being worked out and a decision will be taken in less than three months.

It has been observed that the Sultanate has the lowest traffic fines compared to other countries in the region, where the number of accidents and casualties are much less. Just to quote, for a traffic offence where Oman imposes a fine of RO 10, other countries are slapping not less than five to six times of this amount.

Till today, the traffic department has been facilitating payment of fines at the time of vehicle registration renewal, which is yearly.

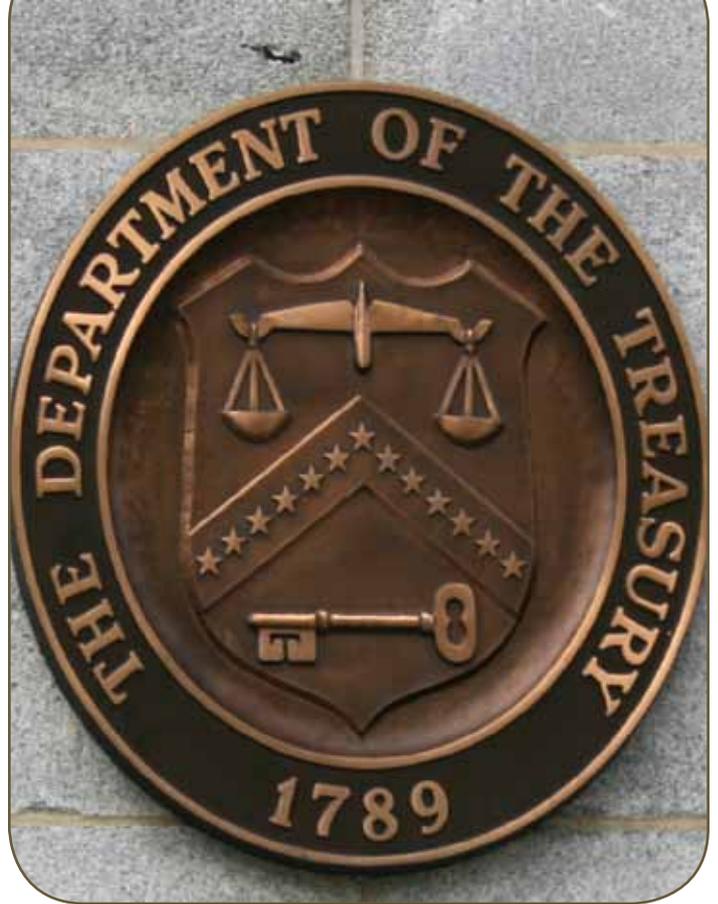
If this comes into force, the same has to be paid at the end of each month, and traffic policemen will have the right to check if fines are not paid for more than a month, failing to comply; an additional fine is imposed on the vehicle owner.

The Third Traffic Safety Expo, to be held next October, at the Oman International Exhibition Center, will bring together people from all areas concerned with road safety, such as high-ranking government officials and representatives, police officers, project managers and highway engineers. The aim of the expo is to improve understanding among key players and stakeholders of how latest technological advancements and best practices can assist reduction of accidents and encourage responsible attitude among road-users leading to a safer driving environment.

The Expo also aims at formulating a strategy to enhance traffic awareness among children and youth, and developing special educational programs on safe behavior on roads.

Source: Oman Daily Observer

UK Signs FATCA International Tax Compliance Agreement with the US



WASHINGTON DC - Tax authorities in the US will be required to pass on information about financial account holders, who are UK residents, as part of an agreement implementing the US Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA).

The Treasury said that the agreement established a “reciprocal approach” which will help tackle UK tax evasion and prevent evasion by US taxpayers with accounts in the UK. The UK is the first country to enter into an agreement to implement FATCA, and its agreement closely follows the model issued in conjunction with the governments of France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the US.

“It is the first of its kind and represents a significant step forward in the scope and nature of information exchange between governments. Furthermore, the changes we have achieved to FATCA implementation will provide significant benefits to UK financial institutions,” said Exchequer Secretary David Gauke, who signed the agreement on behalf of the UK, to the Treasury. He added that financial institutions and other interested parties would now be consulted on the implementation of the agreement to enable draft legislation to be published this year. The agreement itself is subject to ratification by Parliament after a 21-day scrutiny period.

FATCA is aimed at preventing tax evasion by US residents using foreign accounts. It introduces reporting requirements for foreign financial institutions (FFI) with respect to accounts held by US residents, irrespective of national privacy laws. Institutions which do not collect and report this information can be subject to a 30% ‘withholding tax’ on their own US source income and sales proceeds, however, as part of the final agreement with the UK, withholding tax will not be imposed on income received or payments made by UK financial institutions.

For FATCA’s purposes, FFI include any foreign entities whose principle business is accepting, holding, investing or trading in securities or commodities. This can include banks, investment funds, hedge funds, private equity funds and pension funds. However “pension schemes or other retirement arrangements” established in the UK will be exempted from the reporting requirements as they present “a low risk of being used to evade US tax”, according to the Treasury, while individual savings accounts (ISAs), save as you earn (SAYE) schemes and premium bonds will also be exempted.

Exemptions also apply to public institutions including governmental organizations, the central bank and the UK offices of certain specified international organizations. Non-profit organizations, “locally based” financial organizations such as credit unions and friendly societies which meet certain conditions will also be treated as “deemed compliant FFIs”, according to the terms of the agreement.

Source: *Out-Law.com*



Abu-Ghazaleh: ASIP Launches Famous Arab Trademarks Initiative, Establishes Association for Protecting Owners of Trademarks

AMMAN - The Arab Society for Intellectual Property (ASIP) launched an exciting initiative aims at highlighting Arab trademarks worldwide.

This initiative comes as an implementation of the recent decisions concluded by ASIP's Board of Directors based on the suggestion of HE Dr. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh, ASIP's president. A special committee prepared a questionnaire that was circulated to all communication channels via an independent special website www.toparabbrands.com, ASIP's website, news websites, social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Youtube) as well as other various media, in order to reach as much public opinions as possible in the Arab countries (business sectors, chambers of commerce and industry, associations, professional unions, universities, and others).

Information will be collected and analyzed electronically to issue two lists: one includes the most famous Arab trademarks in general, and the second contains the most famous Arab trademarks by sector.

Mr. Moutasem Al-Dmour, ASIP executive director, said: "Voting for the famous trademarks using the questionnaire will begin in mid-September until the 1st of November 2012. In addition, awards will be granted according to specific standards for those who have completed the questionnaire."

He added: "A specific minimum number of votes will be set for a trademark to be considered famous within the list, and a trademark must obtain the votes of at least five countries. The winning trademarks will be announced on the basis of the public views and as per voting electronically without any human intervention."

The questionnaire does not allow anyone to vote more than once via the same e-mail which makes it a very controllable voting process.

Meanwhile, and according to Al-Dmour, a new association for the protection of owners of famous Arab trademarks will be established.

"Dr. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh, ASIP's president, instructed during the last meeting of the Board of Directors to establish an association for the protection of owners of famous Arab trademarks. Such protection is to be achieved through developing standards for Intellectual Property valuation, particularly famous trademarks, as well as assisting owners of Arab trademarks to promote their fame internationally," he concluded.

For participating, kindly check the following website: <http://www.toparabbrands.com/default.aspx?lang=ar>



Customs Agents Foil Captagon Smuggling Attempt

AMMAN-Jordan Customs Department (JCD) officials announced that agents had seized 30,000 Captagon pills recently found hidden in the luggage of passengers of a bus entering the country, via the Jaber border crossing from Syria.

"Following a thorough search of two passengers' belongings, agents found the illegal narcotics hidden in their luggage. The pills were destined for a neighboring country," a senior JCD official said. He also added that the men were referred to the State Security Court prosecution for questioning.

JCD agents have aborted an attempt to smuggle 60 wristwatches that were hidden in a vehicle entering the country from the same border crossing. The brand-name watches were hidden in a secret compartment in the vehicle, and were discovered by JCD agents who became suspicious of the vehicle, the official added.

"The watches were seized and will be examined by an official expert who will assess their value and impose fines before returning them to their owner," the source added.

Source: *The Jordan Times*



Three Draft Laws Introduced in the FNC of Emirates

ABU DHABI -The Federal government has tabled three draft laws in the Federal National Council (FNC) pertaining to compulsory education, plant genetic resources for food and agriculture and amendments to the federal Decree No. 2 for 2004 on the establishment of the Emirates Identity Authority (EIDA).

According to the letter sent by Minister of State for FNC Affairs Dr. Anwar Mohammed Gargash to the FNC Speaker, Mohammed Ahmed Al Murr, the drafts were tabled following endorsement by the cabinet during its session, held last July.

The explanatory note for the proposed compulsory education law states that education is one of the fundamental elements of progress. The note quotes Article 17 of the Constitution which emphasizes that education is compulsory at the primary level and that it is free at all levels.

The proposed law on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture is aimed at ensuring conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic as food for humans or as feeds for animals.

The note on the proposed amendments to EIDA establishment law provides changing the frequency of EIDA board meeting from monthly to quarterly.

Source: *WAM (Emirates News Agency)*



India: Balancing Public and Private Interests in the IP Regime

NEW DELHI – There have been two court orders in India that underscored the complexities underlying the country's Intellectual Property (IP) regime.

The Chennai-based Intellectual Property Appellate Board (IPAB), which is responsible for hearing appeals on patent applications, rejected a petition by German pharma major Bayer AG, seeking a stay on an order of India's Controller of Patents granting a compulsory licence (CL) to Indian generic drug maker Natco Pharma Limited, for a drug used to treat liver and kidney cancer.

Public health advocates have welcomed the order. "This decision once again affirms that courts can and should act in the interest of public health in the case of pharmaceutical products," Leena Menghaney of Médecins Sans Frontières' Access Campaign said in a public statement. The case is India's first Compulsory Licence (CL).

Bayer's future course of action is not known. In an emailed statement later this year, Bayer said "We will rigorously continue to defend our Intellectual Property Rights which are a prerequisite for bringing innovative medicines to patients." James Love, director of Knowledge Ecology International (KEI), said in another statement, "It is possible and indeed likely that Bayer will continue to litigate this

issue, which will soon be scheduled for another hearing on its merits, now that the stay has been rejected. It is important that the US and German governments, and the European Commission, resist the temptation to interfere with the Indian legal system while this matter is litigated," Love said. "What is at stake is nothing less than the right to live."

The IPAB order in the Bayer versus Natco case comes hot on the heels of the Delhi High Court ruling, involving Cipla, another Indian generic drug maker, and two pharma multinationals, namely Swiss drug maker F. Hoffmann-La Roche Ltd. and the New York-based OSI Pharmaceuticals Inc. In this case, Cipla was being accused of infringing Roche's patent on cancer drug Tarceva, which Cipla sells under the brand name Erlotinib.

The Delhi High Court in its order held that Roche's patent on the drug is valid. However, it also said that Cipla did not infringe Roche's patent as it has been selling the polymorph B (variant of the basic drug compound) form of the drug which is known as erlotinib in generic terms.

The two recent court orders provide a backdrop to another landmark case involving Indian generic drugmakers and a multinational pharma company.

Source: IP-Watch

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