

### **IPO fees revision**

THE commerce division of the ministry of commerce and textiles has announced an upward revision of fees/charges for the filing of trademarks, patents and copyrights applications vide a notification on March 4. These amendments are to be effective from March 9.

Established as an autonomous body in 2005 with the aim of strengthening intellectual property rights in the country through a unified and integrated management system, Intellectual Property Organisation-Pakistan is losing its core focus of facilitating and safeguarding businesses and becoming a business in its own rights.

Over the years, not only international but local trade mark, patent and copyrights registrations have increased across the country. The main function of IPO-Pakistan is to be around providing for an efficient and transparent platform whereby investor confidence is further strengthened in order to contribute towards a higher influx of both foreign and local investment.

However, the sorry state of affairs: Vacant offices to lack of either procurement and employment of technology and/or outdated processes and procedures, are a hindrance to the operational excellence that was once the conceptual foundation stone of IPO-Pakistan's establishment.

Inadequate allocation of funds and resources has resulted in opposition cases pending from as far back as 1990 they are in thousands.

Now IPO-Pakistan is revising the official fee from March 9. Without conducting an independent financial audit of the past years, this incremental rate at such a hasty timeline is completely unjustifiable.

The revenues received from the registries over the last 14 years are nowhere to be seen to be employed in the alleviation of the field of intellectual property in Pakistan as a whole. It is apprehended that the incremental rates will also not be used for any purpose or to benefit IP offices.

An increase in official fees for trademarks, patents and copyrights will deter the local businesses, especially the small and medium enterprises, from filing for registration of their products, services and marks. It should be noted that in an economy such as Pakistan's, incremental expenditures on any intrinsic attributes of a business are taken as unnecessary expenses. Thus they are done away with.

The latest notification seems like an arbitrary increase without any foreseeable benefits for the businesses.

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