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### Taste of media for scandals must be broader: Police Spokesman

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by Sanath Nanayakkare

'Stay Safe from fakes' awareness programme held at the Hilton Residencies recently. Police Spokesman Ruwan Gunasekara addresses the gathering.

I know from experience that the media wants to learn from me about crimes, wrongdoings and scandals, but I would like you to lay the same emphasis on and give the same news value to

operations carried out by law enforcement agencies against illegal trafficking of counterfeit goods, Police Spokesman ASP Ruwan Gunasekara told the media recently.

The police spokesman made this remark while addressing a forum held recently at the Hilton Colombo Residencies, organized by the American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham). The event brought together all relevant stakeholders onto one platform to address the challenges and consequences posed by the illegal trafficking of counterfeit goods to Sri Lanka.

The event reflected that the country's law enforcement bodies, including the police department, the Consumer Affairs Authority, right holders of brands, public interest groups, the print and electronic media are all fortifying their coordinated effort to expose culprits and their unscrupulous practices with the intention of safeguarding consumers as well as right holders.

This effort was part of the 'Stay Safe from fakes' campaign and marked the first step in a three part Capacity Building Workshop series designed to educate the public and share knowledge with the lawmakers on the issue of violations of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR).

Associated Motorways (AMW), Ceylon Tobacco Company (CTC), Microsoft, GlaxoSmithKline together with Sudath Perera Associates, Sri Lanka Police, Sri Lanka Customs and Consumer Affairs Authority partnered this event.

They addressed legislative, national, regional and international issues, techniques of customs investigations and how the judiciary indict wrong doers.

Ms.Chandrika Thilakarathne, Director Consumer Affairs and Information of the Consumer Affairs Authority speaking at the event said, "The costs and negative effects of counterfeit products on all stakeholders are broad and numerous - ranging from deprived taxes, royalties and other revenues, loss of goodwill and reputation, reduced incentive to innovate and invest, lower employment, etc. It has been recorded that over 750,000 jobs are lost annually due to counterfeits on a global scale. It is therefore fundamental that we, as a country take steps to enforce strong civil and criminal laws to protect IPR if we are to continue to foster innovation and creativity, safeguard consumers, and drive economic growth."

"Counterfeiting is a global problem fuelled by socio economic variables such as poverty, ambivalent consumer attitudes towards IPR, the involvement of criminal networks and easy-access to illegal goods, she further said.

Migara Perera, Senior Manager Security and Administration at GlaxoSmithKline said, "Available research estimates that 25%-30% of the medicines supplied in developing countries are either substandard or counterfeit. Many forms of legitimate medicines have been counterfeited for a multitude of reasons including the lack of overheads available for quality control and the ease of inserting these products into the distribution chain."

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