

UK Police cracking down on online piracy; Holds lessons for India in tackling the menace

NEW DELHI, 4 April 2016: To combat the menace of digital piracy, the UK's Police Intellectual Property Crime Unit (PIPCU)'s Operation Creative law enforcement program was coming down hard on online pirates. PIPCU's aim as to investigate, disrupt and serious and organized intellectual property crime which causes significant harm or damage to the UK economy or the general public, said **Mr. David Clark, Detective Chief Superintendent, City of London Police**, at a FICCI conference on '**Digital Advertising: Protecting Brand Integrity & Stimulating Content Creation**'.

Mr. Clark said that the strategic objectives of the UK Police were to address IP crime through prosecution and disruption; use a problem-solving approach to address the international threat; maintain an intelligence-led capability; support enforcement activity with effective media coverage; develop a PREVENT strategy with the IPO and other organizations; and reduce IP crime through a partnership approach with stakeholders. He added that there was an urgent need of behavioral change in consumers as well who should realize that buying illegal products was a crime.

He said that a Digital Trading Standards Group (DTSG) had been established to ensure that digital display advertising was not supporting inappropriate or illegal content/services. A UK Good Practice Principles had also been drafted which integrated the industry-police approach. Highlighting the achievements of the UK Police, Mr. Clark said that 8500 counterfeit websites has been suspended since PIPCU's inception in 2013.

In his presentation on '*Online Advertising, Brand Integrity and Content Creation: Problems and Solutions*', **Mr. John Medeiros, Chief Policy Officer, Cable and Satellite Broadcasting Association of Asia (CASBAA)**, said that advertising-financed piracy was an extremely profitable business as an economic study of the US market alone showed estimated pirate website ad revenue at \$227 million annually. The 30 largest sites were earning an average of \$4.4 million per year in 2013 and even small sites could easily earn \$100,000. Barriers to entry are low and attracting a user base required little effort or investment.

Mr. Medeiros said that Invalid Traffic (IVT) hosts were using online systems to generate non-human traffic (NHT) to illegitimately increase profit and high rates of IVT were seen 50 times more frequently among illegitimate sites than legitimate ones. He added that the growing problem of online ad misplacement is not only resulting in financially encouraging various illegal activities but was also causing serious damage to the integrity of major brands when they appear on illegal sites.

Mr. Joe Welch, Senior Vice President, Government Relations, 21 Century FOX, said that FICCI's advocacy on IPR policy had led to many significant and effective changes in the policies related to IP. He added that a sound policy dialogue to appropriately tackle the menace of piracy and a conducive environment to invigorate investment climate for the creative industry in India will definitely benefit and project India globally as a preferred destination for investments by the creative industries of the world.

The inaugural session was followed by presentations and discussions on the critical issue of misplaced ads resulting in funding of illegal activities. Potential solutions that could be adopted by India to curtail this practice were explored to help digital advertising and the creative industries co-exist and flourish in today's innovative and investment-led economy.

