

dti wages war on pirated goods

Paying a fraction of the price for your favourite DVD might seem like a sweet deal, but the Department of Trade and Industry has warned that there is a very bitter side to pirated and illicit goods.



Piracy and counterfeit goods are not just a South African problem- it's a worldwide problem. Here, in the Brazilian capital of Brasilia, more than half a million counterfeit CDs are destroyed in front of the National Congress. (Image: Agencia Brasil, via Wikimedia Commons)

"Counterfeit and illegally imported goods deprive honest workers in the creative industry of jobs and sustainable income. Manufacturing, selling or buying these goods is not only illegal; it literally takes the food out of the mouths of honest businesses, up and coming artists, entrepreneurs and their families.

"Piracy perpetuates poverty," Trade and Industry Minister Dr Rob Davies said on Sunday.

His message comes as the country gears up for the festive season, where many consumers are bitten by the spending bug. However, many are prepared to take short cuts to save a few rands, and not necessarily the right way.

South Africa is regarded as a top dumping destination for fake and illegally imported goods due to the high demand created by local consumers. Last year alone, the South African Revenue Service (SARS) conducted over 25 000 seizures and confiscated illegal goods valued at R2.6bn.

Goods smuggled in

Goods are often smuggled into the country from places such as South-East Asia. According to the SARS 2012/13 Annual Report that was presented to Parliament in September, the methods used by illicit traders to circumvent customs and other government agencies include identity theft, falsification of documents and ghost businesses.

This costs the country's economy billions of rands in lost revenue.

"As Proud South Africans, we cannot allow our creative industries to continue bleeding while criminal scavengers illegally benefit through stealing the work of our artists and creative minds.

"Pirated goods rob the original creators of their future. This also robs the government of tax revenue and ultimately has a negative impact on South Africa's economy," Proudly South African chief executive officer Advocate Leslie Sedibe said.

Success in the detection of illicit CDs, DVDs and tobacco products was achieved at ports of entry and mail centres by Customs Operations.

Every day sees one bust after another

It secured an average of 26 busts a day at ports of entry across the country and detections included illicit cigarettes worth R37.8m, counterfeit clothing worth R155m and counterfeit CDs and DVDs worth R671m.

"However, the success of our enforcement agencies is undermined by the continued demand for these illegal products by us consumers. We must say no to pirated goods and illegal imports.

"By buying pirated goods, consumers are not just saving a few rands - they are effectively supporting a worldwide franchise of criminal activity," said Davies.

Davies said it was important to unite behind efforts to fight piracy and illegal imports in order to prevent job losses, stimulate job creation, and ultimately fuel economic growth.

Both the dti and Proudly SA have urged consumers to support local industries by buying original and genuine products from legal and reputable retailers and shops. Consumers are encouraged to support local products and be proudly South African.

The call to boycott pirated goods is supported by the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC), Southern African Federation against Copyright Theft (SAFACT) and the South African Police Service (SAPS).

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