

Half of provinces pay karaoke copyright royalties in China

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BEIJING - Nearly half of Chinese provinces have taken initiatives to collect karaoke copyright royalties by the end of 2007 in an effort to protect intellectual property rights (IPR) in audio and video sectors.

China Audio and Video Association (CAVA) and China Copyright Society of Works of Music (CCSWM) said 15 provinces and municipalities, including Beijing, Guangdong and Jiangsu, had so far agreed to pay copyright royalties, and the practice should be spread nationwide.

Karaoke operators are required to pay a daily charge of 12 yuan (US\$ 1.6) for each karaoke room - less in underdeveloped regions - for the use of musical and video products, as stated in a National Copyright Administration notice in November 2006.

Liu Chuntian, an IPR expert, said the charges represented the fact that China's IPR protections had shifted from words to practice.

An official with the country's IPR protection group echoed Liu, saying that the move marked new progress in property protection.

However, some Karaoke operators were still trying to avoid or delay paying the fee, and using the song databases illegally.

Lv Wenju, spokesman with the CAVA and the CCSWM, said the associations would accelerate IPR protection campaigns, and resort to court proceedings against illegal use of the songs.

Yunnan province had recently found a case of illegally copying of a 20,000-song-database. The two suspects have been taken into custody. The other 16 Chinese provinces have plans to implement IPR for karaoke performances, but no timetable has been provided as to when this will be carried out.

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