

# Copyright pirates now making fake car parts

Perreira

rates appear to draw attention to the counterfeit timing belts, tyre rims and sports rims and selling them for up to 50 per cent less than the originals.

Specialising in imitations, Perreira said more counterfeit goods had appeared in the past year. The company and its distributors are concerned and have started legal action.

In one case, Gates Rubber and its joint venture, Unitta, took legal action against two firms here for making belts which bear the Gates mark.

The fake Unitta belts were made from a flattened rubber with equipment used to make the originals.

Perreira said that Gates Rubber is expected to act against the counterfeiters after its distributors complained that

the fake goods were hurting their business.

There were also complaints from motorists that they had experienced belt and engine failure soon after buying the product.

This surprised Gates Rubber, as Unitta belts are supposed to last for up to seven years.

A spokesman for the company said that it had started legal action against the counterfeiters, who, if convicted, face a \$100,000 fine and five years' jail.

Four lawyers specialising in intellectual property said that, in the past 12 months, they had received more complaints from clients — distributors and sole agents of car parts — against counterfeiters.

And, where previously the culprits used to counterfeit batteries and ball bearings, they were now making fake exhaust pipes, tyre rims and lamps.

In most cases, private investigation agencies have been hired to trace the fakes, find the syndicate leaders and

make trap purchases.

The lawyers said they had written six letters of demand since January warning counterfeiters to stop distributing imitation exhaust pipes, fan belts and sports rims which bear the trademark of the original goods.

Motor dealers and workshops which offer the imitation products openly are the next targets.

A lawyer from a big firm said: "Our strategy will be to hit the workshops hard even if they sell only a few pieces."

He added that if workshops and dealers stopped offering counterfeit products, the demand for such items would drop.

But wiping out imitation car parts might be harder than imagined as many motorists are attracted by the low prices.

Neither, in most cases, do they experience any drop in the performance of the vehicle or notice unusually fast wear and tear of the imitation goods.