

S.Y

SCMP

25/6/97

COPYRIGHT

18-month protection remains

JOYCE PANG

Restrictions on parallel imports will continue to be relaxed only after 18 months, under the Copyright Bill which became law yesterday. Despite a Law Reform Commission suggestion to decriminalise parallel imports, the Government retained the 18-month protection period. There was stiff opposition to decriminalisation from the film and recording industry which demanded a longer protection period.

Parallel imports, unlike pirated goods, are genuine products from sources other than the authorised dealers.

The bill's passage ended the year-long lobbying war between the film industry and video retailers over authorised dealing and consumer choices.

"The question we now have is not about copyright but the fair and orderly operation of the market," said the Liberal Party's Selina Chow Liang Shuk-ye.

Representatives of the

film industry, including movie star Jackie Chan, had told legislators that the early release of copies of films had been hitting cinema attendances.

Chan Kam-lam of the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong sought a longer protection period of 24 months, but failed.

Democrat Sin Chung-cho said: "We have to protect copyright owners, rather than the film and recording industry which has to take care of its own survival."