

HAD's successful execution of search warrants to investigate suspected unlicensed hotels and guesthouses

The Hotel and Guesthouse Accommodation (Amendment) Ordinance 2020 (Amendment Ordinance) took effect from December 1. To combat unlicensed hotels and guesthouses, the Amendment Ordinance empowers the Hotel and Guesthouse Accommodation Authority for effective law enforcement.

The Office of the Licensing Authority (OLA) in the Home Affairs Department, on the commencement date of the Amendment Ordinance, successfully applied to the court for search warrants in respect of two suspected unlicensed hotels/guesthouses in Tsim Sha Tsui and Tai Kok Tsui. Subsequently, enforcement officers executed the search warrants and entered the premises for inspection and collection of evidence.

"The OLA will continue to spare no effort to combat unlicensed hotels and guesthouses in order to protect the safety of the lodgers as well as members of the public. The Amendment Ordinance helps the department to tackle the rapid changing mode of unlicensed hotel/guesthouse operations and enhance the enforcement effectiveness," a spokesman for the Home Affairs Department said.

The spokesman stressed that operating or managing an unlicensed hotel and guesthouse is a criminal offence and can lead to a criminal record. The owner of the subject premises, unless a statutory defence can be established, also commits an offence. The maximum penalty has been increased to a fine of \$500,000 and three years' imprisonment. A six-month closure order may also be issued for the premises involved in a repeated offence.

The list of licensed hotels and guesthouses is available on the OLA's website (www.hadla.gov.hk) and the mobile application "Hong Kong Licensed Hotels and Guesthouses" for public reference. Anyone with information about suspected unlicensed hotels and guesthouses can report it to the OLA through the hotline (tel: 2881 7498), by email (hadlaenq@had.gov.hk), or by fax (2504 5805) using the report form downloaded from the OLA's website, or through the mobile application "Hong Kong Licensed Hotels and Guesthouses".