

Hong Kong Customs combats sale of game circumvention devices and infringing game consoles (with photo)

Hong Kong Customs conducted a nine-day special operation between August 14 and 22 to combat the online sale of game circumvention devices and infringing game consoles. A total of eight suspected circumvention devices, 640 sets of suspected infringing game consoles, about 200 SD cards containing suspected infringing games and a batch of computer equipment, with an estimated market value of about \$1 million, were seized in the operation.

Through carrying out cyber patrols and conducting analyses by a big-data analytics system, Customs earlier found that sellers were utilising online social platforms and online marketplaces to sell suspected game circumvention devices and suspected infringing game consoles. After an in-depth investigation, and with the assistance of the copyright owner, Customs officers disguised as customers to conduct online test purchases, and took enforcement action. A commercial unit in Kwun Tong and a residential unit in Tsuen Wan were raided, and the batch of suspected game circumvention devices and suspected infringing game consoles were seized. Customs officers from the Computer Forensic Laboratory were also summoned to the scene to support the operation. Through on-site digital examination, more than 1 000 suspected infringing games were found on two computers connected with external storage media, which were used to process infringing games.

During the operation, two men, aged 28 and 41, were arrested. They were suspected of violating the Copyright Ordinance. One of the arrestees was charged with the offence of breaching the conditions of stay, while the other arrestee was released on bail pending further investigation.

The investigation is ongoing.

Customs urges members of the public to obtain games through official channels if they wish to run the games on game consoles legitimately. Consumers should respect intellectual property rights and refrain from purchasing circumvention devices, modified gaming consoles, or infringing games. Circumvention devices or modified game consoles may be connected to unknown websites linking to computer viruses or malicious programs, which could cause irreparable consequences for users.

Customs reminds that game programming, regardless of new or old versions, is protected by the Copyright Ordinance. Selling infringing games or circumvention devices, or providing circumvention services, is a serious offence. Members of the public are urged not to defy the law.

Under the Copyright Ordinance, any person who sells or possesses an infringing copy of a copyright work with a view to selling it commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$50,000 per

infringing copy and imprisonment for four years. Any person who, for the purpose of a circumvention business, or in the course of a circumvention business, sells or lets for hire a relevant device, or provides relevant service in order to allow circumventing an effective technological measure which has been applied in relation to a copyright work, is liable to a maximum penalty of a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for four years.

Members of the public may report any suspected infringement activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002).

