

Hong Kong Customs combats sale of game circumvention devices and pirated electronic games (with photo)

Hong Kong Customs conducted a special operation yesterday (June 4) to combat the sale of game circumvention devices and pirated electronic games. A batch of suspected circumvention devices and infringing game consoles with an estimated market value of about \$210,000 was seized.

Upon intelligence analysis and with the assistance of a copyright owner, Customs officers took enforcement action yesterday and raided five retail shops in Sham Shui Po. A total of 27 suspected circumvention devices, 12 sets of mobile game consoles, eight memory cards loaded with suspected pirated electronic games, 110 sets of game consoles containing suspected pirated electronic games and one set of a computer with an external hard disk used for dealing with pirated games were seized.

Customs officers also seized game consoles preloaded with about 2 000 types of suspected pirated electronic games. Most of the games were nostalgic-type and can be played without using a circumvention device.

During the operation, two male shop owners and three male salespersons aged between 28 and 37 were arrested.

Investigation is ongoing and the arrested persons have been released on bail for further investigation.

The Divisional Commander (Intellectual Property Technology Crime Investigation), Mr Lawrence Ng, said at a press conference today (June 5) that in the electronic game market, copyright owners apply effective technological measures in game consoles to prevent any unauthorised games being played on the device. The arrested persons are suspected to have made pirated games playable in game consoles using circumvention technology.

He reminded shop owners and salespersons not to take part in these illegal activities as selling circumvention devices or offering circumvention service is a serious crime. He also appealed to members of the public to respect intellectual property rights and not to buy any circumvention device, modified electronic game consoles or pirated games.

Under the Copyright Ordinance, any person who 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 infringing activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).

