

Hong Kong Customs combats sale of pirated electronic games and counterfeit gaming accessories (with photo)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (May 19) launched a special operation to combat the sale of pirated electronic games and counterfeit gaming accessories. A total of 283 sets of game consoles loaded with suspected pirated electronic games and 160 suspected counterfeit gaming accessories with an estimated market value of about \$280,000 were seized. Eight persons were arrested.

Customs earlier conducted spot checks at popular electronic games retail shops in various districts and used a big data analytics system to trace shops selling suspected pirated electronic games through online platforms. After an in-depth investigation, with the assistance of the copyright owner, Customs yesterday took enforcement action and raided seven retail shops and two storage facilities in Sham Shui Po. The suspected pirated and counterfeit items in the case were seized.

The seized game consoles had various designs. Some came with the design of arcade game controllers, while some had the design of retro home game consoles or lightweight handheld game devices. These game consoles were preloaded with about 3 000 to 4 000 types of suspected pirated electronic games, most of which were nostalgic games. Some of the seized game consoles could even access designated websites for downloading more suspected pirated electronic games.

During the operation, seven men and one woman aged between 34 and 44 were arrested, comprising four shop owners and four salespersons.

An investigation is ongoing. The likelihood of further arrests has not been excluded.

Customs reminds traders that both new and nostalgic electronic games are under copyright protection. Selling pirated games is a serious crime that they must not take part in.

Consumers should respect intellectual property rights and refrain from buying any pirated games. Customs also reminds members of the public that the unknown websites connected with the pirated game consoles might contain computer viruses or malware which can pose a risk to users.

Under the Copyright Ordinance, any person who sells or possesses for sale any infringing items commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$50,000 per infringing copy and imprisonment for four years.

Under the Trade Descriptions Ordinance, any person who sells or possesses for sale any goods with a forged trademark commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five 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).

