

Hong Kong Customs combats sale of pirated electronic games (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (October 14) launched a special operation codenamed "Arcade" to combat the sale of pirated electronic games. A total of 173 sets of game consoles loaded with suspected pirated electronic games and 97 suspected counterfeit electronic game memory cards with an estimated market value of about \$300,000 were seized. Fifteen persons were arrested.

Using its big data analytics system, Customs earlier conducted an investigation and analysis into the sale activities of suspected pirated electronic games in the market. Spot checks at popular electronic game retailers in various districts were conducted to trace shops selling suspected pirated electronic games through online platforms.

After an in-depth investigation, and with the assistance of the copyright owner, law enforcement action was taken yesterday, in which 13 retail shops and two storage facilities in Sham Shui Po and Tsuen Wan were raided. Game consoles loaded with suspected pirated electronic games and suspected counterfeit electronic game memory cards were seized.

The seized game consoles were preloaded with about 3 000 to 4 000 types of suspected pirated electronic games, mainly nostalgic ones that can be played without using a circumvention device. Some of the seized game consoles can also access designated websites for downloading more suspected pirated electronic games.

During the operation, 13 men and two women aged between 17 and 51 were arrested, including seven shop owners and eight salespersons.

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

Both new and retro games are under copyright protection. Customs reminds traders that the selling of pirated games is a serious crime that they must not take part in.

Customs also reminds members of the public that those unknown websites connected with the pirated game consoles may contain computer viruses or malware, which can pose risks to users. Consumers should purchase at reputable shops and not buy pirated games.

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.

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).

