

Hong Kong Customs detects suspected infringing cases involving unauthorised communication of copyright works to public (with photo)

Hong Kong Customs today (June 12) conducted an enforcement operation to combat infringement activities involving unauthorised communication of copyright works to the public. Preliminary figures show that about 125 suspected illicit streaming devices and a batch of electronic equipment, with an estimated market value of about \$200,000, were involved in the cases.

Customs has been closely monitoring the market situation, and found that some retail shops were offering illicit streaming devices, namely TV set-top boxes and designated application programs, for watching infringing audiovisual contents and sports events, which were suspected of communicating copyright works to the public without authorisation. Upon receipt of allegation from copyright owners, related investigation was then initiated.

After an in-depth investigation and with the assistance of the copyright owners, Customs officers today raided six retail shops which were suspected to be connected with the cases in Wan Chai, Kwun Tong, Hung Hom and Yuen Long respectively and seized the batch of suspected illicit streaming devices.

During the operation, four men aged between 32 and 48 were arrested. They included three shop owners and a salesperson.

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

Starting from June, a number of international sports events will be held. Customs will maintain close co-operation with copyright owners and adopt a multipronged approach, including vigorously combating different kinds of infringing activities, implementing educational and publicity work, and conducting high-profile inspections of commercial establishments, bars, and restaurants across different districts in Hong Kong, so as to enhance the industry and the public's awareness of respecting intellectual property rights and protect intellectual property rights.

Customs reminds merchants not to take part in activities involving unauthorised communication of copyright works to the public. Also, members of the public should respect intellectual property rights and not to buy any illicit streaming devices. Unknown websites connected with the illicit streaming devices might contain computer viruses or malware which can pose a risk to users.

Under the Copyright Ordinance, any person who without the authorisation

of the copyright owner, communicates a copyright work to the public for the purpose of or in the course of any trade or business that consists of communicating works to the public for profit or reward; or communicates the work to the public to such an extent as to affect prejudicially the copyright owner, commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is imprisonment for four years and a fine of \$50,000 in respect of each copyright work.

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) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002/).

