

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

Hong Kong Customs today (October 11) conducted an enforcement operation to combat infringement activities involving unauthorised communication of copyright works to the public. Preliminary figures show that about 1 200 suspected illicit streaming devices and a batch of computers and video equipment, with an estimated market value of about \$1.4 million, were involved in the operation.

Customs earlier received information from a copyright owner alleging that some retail shops were offering customers illicit streaming devices, namely TV set-top boxes and designated application programs, for watching infringing audiovisual contents, which were suspected of communicating copyright works to the public without authorisation.

After an in-depth investigation and with the assistance of the copyright owner, Customs officers took enforcement action today and raided 10 retail shops which were suspected to be connected with the cases in Sham Shui Po and Yuen Long respectively and seized the batch of suspected illicit streaming devices.

During the operation, six men aged between 25 and 39 were arrested. They included three shop owners and three salespersons.

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

It is the first time to apply "communication right" in enforcement operations against infringement activities involving illegal streaming devices since the implementation of the Copyright (Amendment) Ordinance 2022. 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 authorization 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/).

