

Hong Kong Customs makes first-ever detection of suspected infringing karaoke songs and electronic games in party room business (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs conducted a three-day operation codenamed "Skylark" throughout the city from November 5 to yesterday (November 7) against the use of infringing songs in karaoke systems by party room operators in their course of business. In the first-ever case of its kind, two sets of computer servers preloaded with suspected infringing songs, along with 28 sets of karaoke systems used for playing suspected infringing songs were seized. Six sets of game consoles with suspected infringing electronic games were also found and all seizures carried an estimated market value of about \$460,000.

Acting on intelligence analysis and with the assistance of copyright owners, Customs officers raided 15 party rooms in Causeway Bay, Tsim Sha Tsui, Mong Kok, Kwun Tong, Tsuen Wan and Kwai Chung suspected of keeping and using karaoke systems preloaded with infringing songs in their course of business. The suspected infringing items mentioned above were seized at the raided premises.

During the operation, 10 men and eight women aged between 19 and 68 were arrested, among whom six are proprietors and 12 are employees of the premises.

An investigation is ongoing and all arrested persons have been released on bail.

An initial investigation revealed that these party rooms solicited business on social media platforms. Their main business activity was the provision of amusement premises for customers. The rates charged covered the use of entertainment facilities such as the karaoke systems and game console sets.

The karaoke systems seized were preloaded with some 10 000 suspected infringing songs, and can further expand to several hundred thousand via cloud downloads. Some premises were divided into separated rooms, where suspected infringing songs could be accessed by customers through a centralised server linked with a local network.

Customs reminds business operators that they are liable to the Copyright Ordinance, and that it is a serious crime to keep and use pirated materials for business purposes.

Under the Copyright Ordinance, any commercial establishment using infringing computer programmes, movies, TV dramas, musical recordings or music-video recordings in the course of their business would commit 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).

