

Hong Kong Customs mounts operation to combat sale or provision of infringing karaoke songs and patrols with Police on anti-epidemic regulations at party rooms (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs conducted an eight-day operation codenamed "Magpie" throughout the city from December 2 to 9 to combat the sale of infringing karaoke players, and illegal activities involving party room operators to provide infringing karaoke songs to customers in the course of business. Patrols at party rooms were also carried out with the Police to ensure that persons-in-charge of the premises and patrons abide by the anti-epidemic regulations.

During the operation, Customs seized a total of 147 sets of karaoke players with suspected infringing songs and six sets of game consoles with suspected pirated electronic games. The total estimated market value of the seizures was around \$1.3 million. Twenty men and two women were arrested. The Police found that two persons-in-charge of the party rooms and seven patrons have violated the anti-epidemic regulations.

Customs officers earlier received information alleging that karaoke players preloaded with songs without copyright owners' authorisation were sold at a high price at some retail shops in the market. After an in-depth investigation and with the assistance of copyright owners, Customs officers took enforcement action on December 2 and raided eight shops in Sham Shui Po, Mong Kok and Wan Chai as well as a storehouse in Sham Shui Po. A total of 110 sets of karaoke players with an estimated market value of about \$600,000 were seized. Each karaoke player was preloaded with 40 000 to 65 000 suspected infringing songs and was sold at a price ranging from \$2,000 to \$13,000.

During the operation, nine men and one woman aged from 22 to 60 were arrested for being suspected of contravening the Copyright Ordinance. They comprised four shop operators and six shopkeepers. An investigation is ongoing and the 10 arrested persons have been released on bail pending further investigation.

As well, Customs has identified a number of party rooms through intelligence analysis and with the assistance of copyright owners. Joint enforcement operations were conducted with the Police and patrols at 30 party rooms were carried out in Mong Kok, Sham Shui Po, Tsim Sha Tsui and Causeway Bay from December 6 to 9. They were suspected of keeping and providing infringing karaoke songs to customers in the course of business. Customs officers seized 37 sets of karaoke players used for playing suspected infringing songs and six sets of game consoles with suspected pirated electronic games during the inspections. The total estimated market value was

about \$700,000.

During the operation, 11 men and one woman aged from 20 to 44 were arrested for being suspected of contravening the Copyright Ordinance. They comprised 10 persons-in-charge of the party rooms and two staff members. An investigation is ongoing and the 12 arrested persons have been released on bail pending further investigation.

During the above-mentioned joint enforcement operations, the Police issued summons against two male persons-in-charge of three party rooms for being suspected of violating the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F). Moreover, seven female patrons, aged between 23 and 33, were issued with fixed penalty notices for violating the anti-epidemic regulations.

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

Under the Copyright Ordinance, any person who sells or possesses for sale any infringing items, or any commercial establishment using infringing musical recordings, music-video recordings, movies, TV dramas or computer programmes in the course of their business, 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).

