

Managers of unlicensed guesthouses fined

Two women were fined \$6,000 and \$10,000 at the Eastern Magistrates' Courts today (August 27) for contravening the Hotel and Guesthouse Accommodation Ordinance. The women were also fined \$1,000 and \$2,000 for the period in which the offences continued.

The courts heard that in January and April this year, officers of the Office of the Licensing Authority (OLA), the Home Affairs Department, inspected two suspected unlicensed guesthouses on Paterson Street in Causeway Bay. During the inspections, the OLA officers posed as lodgers and successfully rented rooms in these guesthouses on a daily basis.

According to the OLA's records, these guesthouses did not possess licences under the Ordinance on the days of inspection. The women responsible for managing the premises were charged with contravening section 5(1) of the Ordinance.

Furthermore, OLA officers inspected a licensed guesthouse on Paterson Street in Causeway Bay in March this year. The officers found that the actual layout of the premises deviated from the registered drawings and the alteration had not been approved by the Hotel and Guesthouse Accommodation Authority. Conditions 3 and 17 of the licence were breached. Therefore, the woman responsible for managing the premises was charged with contravening section 21(3)(a) of the Ordinance.

A department spokesman stressed that operating or managing an unlicensed guesthouse is a criminal offence and can lead to a criminal record. Upon conviction, the offender is liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and two years' imprisonment.

The spokesman appealed to anyone with information about suspected unlicensed guesthouses to report it to the OLA through the hotline (Tel: 2881 7498), by email (hadlaenq@had.gov.hk), by fax (2504 5805) using the report form downloaded from the OLA website (www.hadla.gov.hk), or through the mobile application "Hong Kong Licensed Hotels and Guesthouses".