

Men and women given suspended jail sentences for operating and managing unlicensed guesthouse

Two men and three women were each sentenced to one month's imprisonment, suspended for 12 months, at the Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts today (June 3) for contravening the Hotel and Guesthouse Accommodation Ordinance.

The courts heard that from August to November last year, officers of the Office of the Licensing Authority (OLA), the Home Affairs Department, inspected four suspected unlicensed guesthouses on Reclamation Street, Portland Street, To Kwa Wan Road and Cheung Sha Wan Road in Kowloon. During the inspections, the OLA officers posed as lodgers and successfully rented rooms or "capsule-like accommodation" in these guesthouses on a daily or hourly basis.

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