

Office of Licensing Authority of Home Affairs Department conducts operation in Yau Tsim Mong (with photos)

The Office of the Licensing Authority (OLA) of the Home Affairs Department (HAD) conducted an operation codenamed "Star Catcher" from August 9 to 21 to inspect premises in Yau Tsim Mong, which were suspected of operating unlicensed guesthouses, and inspected licensed guesthouses, to ensure the safety of the general public.

A spokesman for the HAD said, "During the operation, the OLA found seven premises that were suspected of operating unlicensed guesthouses. Among them, two guesthouses' licences had been suspended due to the damage to the guesthouses from a fire incident. In addition, the OLA found 19 licensed guesthouses that were suspected of breaching licence conditions. The OLA will follow up these cases. If there is sufficient evidence after investigation, the OLA will initiate prosecution."

The spokesman stressed, "Operating unlicensed hotels/guesthouses is a criminal offence. According to the Hotel and Guesthouse Accommodation Ordinance, an offender is liable to a maximum fine of \$500,000 and three years' imprisonment, as well as a criminal record upon conviction. A fine of \$20,000 for each day can also be imposed during which the offence continues. A six-month closure order may also be issued for the hotel/guesthouse involved in a repeated offence. Also, for licensed hotel/guesthouse breaching licence condition(s), the operator is liable to a maximum fine of \$100,000 and two years' imprisonment, as well as a criminal record upon conviction. The OLA may also suspend or refuse to renew its licence."

Tourists and members of the public can make use of the search functions on the OLA's website to check whether the hotel/guesthouse concerned is licensed or not. Any suspected unlicensed hotel/guesthouse should be reported to the OLA by the hotline (Tel: 2881 7498), by email (hadlaenq@had.gov.hk), by fax (2504 5805), or through the mobile application "Hong Kong Licensed Hotels and Guesthouses".

