

# Office of Licensing Authority of Home Affairs Department steps up enforcement actions against unlicensed hotels/guesthouses and illegal club-house operations before festive season holidays (with photos)

Before the festive season holidays, the Office of the Licensing Authority (OLA) of the Home Affairs Department conducted an operation codenamed "Solar Flare" against unlicensed hotels and guesthouses and illegal club-houses at Yau Tsim Mong District for three consecutive days from 17 to 19 December to ensure the safety of lodgers as well as the general public.

A spokesman for the OLA said, "During the operation, the OLA carried out surprise inspections on 16 premises. Eight premises were suspected of operating unlicensed hotels or guesthouses, and one licensed club-house was suspected of being in breach of licensing conditions. The OLA will initiate prosecution on cases with sufficient evidence after completion of the investigation."

The spokesman stressed, "Operating unlicensed hotels or guesthouses is a criminal offence, and such an offence leads to a criminal record upon conviction. According to the Hotel and Guesthouse Accommodation Ordinance, an offender is liable to three years' imprisonment and a maximum fine of \$500,000. 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 a hotel or guesthouse involved in a repeated offence. Moreover, according to the Clubs (Safety of Premises) Ordinance, an offender who contravenes any condition of a certificate of compliance (e.g. failure to produce fire certificate on demand and carrying out alteration and addition works without seeking the OLA's prior approval) is liable to two years' imprisonment and a maximum fine of \$100,000. A fine of \$10,000 for each day can also be imposed during which the offence continues."

Apart from conducting special operations during festive seasons, the OLA also steps up efforts to combat unlicensed guesthouses via online platforms. The OLA has strengthened its intelligence collection by forming a dedicated team to browse webpages, mobile applications, social media, discussion forums, etc, to search for information and intelligence on suspected unlicensed guesthouses. The OLA's law enforcement officers will initiate follow-up investigations when information on unlicensed guesthouses advertised via online platforms is found. The OLA also conducts publicity work on Internet search engines outside Hong Kong to enable tourists' access to the information provided by the OLA in the course of

planning their trips to Hong Kong.

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

