

Operator and managers of unlicensed guesthouses convicted

Two men and four women were charged with contravening the Hotel and Guesthouse Accommodation Ordinance at Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts today (November 28). One woman was sentenced to one month's imprisonment, suspended for 12 months and fined \$10,000. The two men and the other three women were fined from \$8,000 to \$12,000.

The courts heard that in July last year, and May and June this year, officers of the Office of the Licensing Authority (OLA), the Home Affairs Department, inspected six suspected unlicensed guesthouses on Canton Road, Nelson Street, Tung Choi Street, Argyle Street, Cheung Sha Wan Road and Wan Wah Street 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 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 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 will 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".