

Operators and managers of unlicensed guesthouses convicted

Three men and three women were charged with contravening the Hotel and Guesthouse Accommodation Ordinance at the Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts today (August 12). Two women and a man were fined from \$2,000 to \$8,000; a man was sentenced to one month's imprisonment, suspended for 12 months; and the other man and woman were sentenced to two months and four weeks' imprisonment, and three weeks' imprisonment respectively.

The courts heard that between September 2017 and September last year, officers of the Office of the Licensing Authority (OLA), the Home Affairs Department, inspected six suspected unlicensed guesthouses on Granville Circuit, Mong Kok Road, Shanghai Street, Tung Choi Street, Reclamation Street and Victory Avenue in Kowloon. During the inspections, the OLA officers posed as lodgers and successfully rented rooms 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 (hadlaeng@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".