

Operators and managers of unlicensed guesthouses fined

Four women and a man were charged with contravening the Hotel and Guesthouse Accommodation Ordinance at the Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts and the West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts today (June 17). Three of the women were fined \$20,000 to \$40,000, while the other woman was fined \$14,000 for two charges and also fined \$300 for the period in which the offences continued, and the man was fined \$4,000 and also fined \$300 for the period in which the offence continued.

The courts heard that between August and November last year, officers of the Office of the Licensing Authority (OLA), the Home Affairs Department, inspected five suspected unlicensed guesthouses on Castle Peak Road and Wah Yuen Drive in Kwai Chung, Portland Street in Mong Kok, Tai Nan Street in Sham Shui Po and Hoi Ting Road in Tai Kok Tsui. During the inspections, the OLA officers posed as lodgers and successfully rented rooms 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 women and the man 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".