

Man fined for operating unlicensed guesthouse

A man was fined \$15,000 at the Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts today (September 11) for contravening the Hotel and Guesthouse Accommodation Ordinance.

The courts heard that in March this year, officers of the Office of the Licensing Authority (OLA), the Home Affairs Department, when searching the Internet for intelligence about unlicensed guesthouse activities, identified a suspected unlicensed guesthouse on Fuk Lo Tsun Road in Kowloon City. The OLA officers posed as lodgers and successfully rented a room in the guesthouse on a daily basis through an Internet platform.

According to the OLA's records, the guesthouse did not possess a licence under the Ordinance on the day of lodging. The man responsible for operating the premises was 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. Guesthouse licensees may advertise or hold out to provide sleeping accommodation on the Internet. To assist the public and tourists to identify licensed guesthouses, the licensees should indicate clearly "Licensed guesthouse" in all promotional advertisement materials or advertisements related to the guesthouse.

The spokesman appealed to anyone with information about suspected unlicensed guesthouses to report it to the OLA by 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".