

Operators and managers of unlicensed guesthouses sentenced to imprisonment and fined

Two men and two women were charged with contravening the Hotel and Guesthouse Accommodation Ordinance at Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts today (May 8). A man was convicted of managing an unlicensed guesthouse in August 2016 and was given a suspended sentence. The court activated the suspended sentence today and sentenced him to 10 weeks' imprisonment in total. The other man and the two women were fined from \$8,000 to \$32,000. A man was also fined \$1,000 for the period in which the offences continued.

The courts heard that from August last year to February this year, officers of the Office of the Licensing Authority (OLA), the Home Affairs Department, inspected seven suspected unlicensed guesthouses on Reclamation Street, Minden Row, Yu Chau Street and Lai Chi Kok Road in Kowloon. During the inspections, the OLA officers posed as lodgers and successfully rented rooms in these guesthouses on an hourly or 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 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 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".