

SHOCK OVER SHOOTING

Raiding party should exercise restraint, say video operators

'Write in proposal for longer jail terms'

SUGGESTIONS to impose longer jail terms and heavier fines on video tape pirates will be considered if there is official representation by the parties concerned.

Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry deputy director of trademarks and patents Sandell Sebli said video tape distributors would have to write to the Secretary-General of the Ministry.

"A special committee will probably be set to look into the matter once the letter is received," he said, adding that the views of other interested parties, as well as the legal aspects, would have to be considered.

Encik Sandell was commenting on the suggestion by Golden Star managing director Sonny Yap to impose stiffer penalties for infringing the copyright laws.

SEVERAL video outlet operators in Penang have expressed shock over the shooting of a colleague in Bukit Mertajam during an enforcement raid.

They said copyright owners accompanying enforcement officers should not act in a high-handed manner as it would fan emotions.

The death of the video operator last Wednesday could have been avoided if everyone involved had acted with restraint, said the operators.

The raid was carried out by officials from the Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry and Golden Star Sdn Bhd on a video outlet in Jalan Asmara in Bukit Mertajam.

By ZULKIFLI SHUKOR and EDDIE CHUA

"During a heated argument, someone should have had the common sense to calm the situation and seek other ways to resolve the problem," said an operator.

Another video operator in Jalan Kuala Kangsar said operators should not keep pirated copies in the first place.

"Our operation may be different from that of Bukit Mertajam's Juta video centre, but operators on the whole should extend the fullest co-operation to enforcement officers if they are operating legally," he said.

"They should also refrain

from engaging thugs to frighten away the raiding party."

Another operator in Lebu Pitt called on consumers not to patronise video centres suspected of dealing with pirated tapes.

"The business is lucrative, but operators and consumers must ensure that they deal only with legal video copies," he said, adding that the shooting would not have occurred if everyone had kept to the laws governing the Copyright Act.

Police yesterday classified the shooting of Teh

Guan Hock, 36, during the raid as murder and have obtained a seven-day remand order to question three men in connection with the shooting.

State OCCI ACP Hizan Babjan said police seized three pistols in the possession of the three men and an iron rod from the scene.

It was learnt that during the raid, one of the Golden Star officials fired warning shots to deter Teh from turning violent after a heated exchange of words.

Teh was hit by a shot in the chest and died on arrival at the Bukit Mertajam district hospital at 3.20pm the same day.

At a Press conference outside the Bukit Mertajam

Sessions Court yesterday, Golden Star released a 13-page Press statement outlining its side of the incident which led to the shooting.

Golden Star, through its counsel, Mr Gerald Alan Gomez, unsuccessfully contested the police application for the remand order.

At another Press conference at the Bukit Mertajam DAP service centre, the sister of the deceased, Ms Teh Sok Hong, condemned the Golden Star officials for acting high-handedly during the raid.

Accompanied by her counsel, Mr Gooi Hock Seng, she said she would be taking legal action against the three men.

'Our officials are armed for self-protection'

GOLDEN Star said 10 of its officials investigating video tape piracy were armed with revolvers.

Its managing director, Mr Sonny Yap, said they obtained 10 gun licences for the officials who had been threatened by thugs during raids on outlets dealing in pirated video tapes.

"We need the guns for self-protection. However, our men are well-trained and disciplined and they are not trigger-happy," he said.

Mr Yap claimed that one of his men was beaten by the brother and owner of the video centre after they found a secret compartment storing pirated video tapes in the premises.

The joint raid with enforcement officers of the Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry was to expose video centres dealing with pirated Hong Kong serials owned by Golden Star which is the sole licensee of TVB International of Hong Kong.

"The official fired a warning shot and warned the dealer not to assault any members of the raiding team with iron bars," he alleged.

"In fact, my men and officers from the Ministry retreated when the owner and his brother started assaulting them with iron bars."

He claimed that one of his officers was assaulted in front of the shop and fell.

"At this point, he pulled the trigger at one of his assailants. It was done out of self-defence," he claimed.

Three days ago, Mr Yap had told a Press conference that local video pirate syndicates were employing thugs in running their businesses.

Meanwhile, a Ministry official said it was normal for them to conduct raids without the escort of policemen as they were empowered to carry out search and seizure on counterfeit goods.

However, the official declined to elaborate as police investigations were underway.