

# Anti-piracy officials crack whip against 21 stores

Authorities seize 29,000 illegal xbox game copies

- By Naushad K. Cherrayil, Staff Reporter
- Published: 00:00 May 30, 2010



Dubai : The UAE Ministry of Economy with the help of law enforcement authorities raided 21 stores in Abu Dhabi, Sharjah and Dubai to confiscate 29,000 pirated Microsoft Xbox 360 games.

"The ramifications of piracy and the distribution of pirated goods will always negatively impact any economy and hinder growth. It does no justice to the businesses that are operating legitimately and complying with all regulatory and UAE laws," Mohammad Ahmad Bin Abdul Aziz, Managing Director of the Ministry of Economy, said in a statement.

Jawad Al Redha, Anti-Piracy Manager, Microsoft Gulf, told Gulf News that the authorities are tightening their grip on counterfeit products sold in the UAE "and we will take all necessary actions to clamp down on piracy."

He said, "Not only do pirated games seriously affect our consumers, but they also threaten our partners and resellers that do business legitimately. We will continue working closely with all the relevant local ministries and authorities to pursue all offenders taking an unfair advantage of our legitimate partners and consumers.

Three weeks ago, the National Media Council destroyed 22,000 pirated CDs containing all the latest movies, audios, pornography, computer software and PlayStation and Xbox games confiscated from Dubai.

Al Redha said, "We will be monitoring the market to see what is displayed and sold by the retailers and to ensure the laws are followed.

"Piracy had increased largely because of the unprecedented growth of the IT industry in areas where there are no committed efforts to control piracy. The spread of internet has likewise contributed to the current situation as access to pirated software has moved from the streets to the internet," he said.

Al Redha added that the country was able to achieve one of the lowest piracy rates in the Arab region due to strict laws and the significant efforts undertaken by authorities.

The UAE's software piracy remained the same last year at 36 per cent compared to 2008 despite strong growth in PC usage and internet penetration while the value fell 8.82 per cent to \$155 million (Dh569 million).

In Abu Dhabi, the Ministry of Economy coordinated with the Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development to gain additional officers for assistance; enabling them to target a number of stores, and to conduct the raids simultaneously.

In Sharjah, the store raids conducted by authorities led to the confiscation of pirated products and the arrest of three people who are facing criminal charges. One store which is known to be a major supplier of pirated games in the market was raided; approximately 25,000 pirated DVDs were seized.

The pirated games were purportedly found on hidden shelves, which held neatly arranged bundles of 50 pirated DVDs.

### **Loss of warranty**

"Most pirated games don't deliver the high quality gaming experience that Microsoft Xbox 360 offers for the consumer, depriving them of the blockbuster entertainment experience they expect from Xbox 360. And crucially, to play pirated games the console needs to be modified or "chipped". This then results in the loss of the warranty for the gaming console," he added.

"Piracy is a threat that should be addressed collectively by public and private sector collaboration. We call for greater efforts and action to combat software piracy and other intellectual property rights violations," Al Redha said.