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Blitz on pirated and smut VCDs to continue

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Police will continue to come down hard on those responsible for the distribution of pirated and pornographic video compact discs until Sept 9 under the on-going Ops Banteras.

Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Norian Mai said he had instructed the Commercial Crimes Division to extend the nationwide crackdown with the help of the Special Branch.

It would include raids on entertainment outlets and would also weed out electronic gaming machines, drug abuse, illegal immigrants and vice activities.

Norian was speaking at a Press conference at the Federal police headquarters in Bukit Aman today. Also present was Federal CID director Datuk Seri Salleh Mat Som.

The crackdown was ordered following a directive from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad three weeks ago. It was launched on May 1 and the first phase ended three days ago.

Last Sunday, State police chiefs and directors of the Special Branch, CID and Internal Security and Public Order were summoned to the Federal police headquarters in Bukit Aman for a second-phase meeting with Norian and his deputy, Datuk Seri Bakri Omar.

Norian said although it was difficult to eliminate all illegal activities, 800 policemen in 40 teams would continue to mount the nationwide blitz.

Police will continue to raid premises selling pirated and smut VCDs, as well as houses believed to be used for running VCD business.

Describing the Malaysian VCD distributors as international players, Norian said more than 100 million VCD copies were exported each year. According to police intelligence the players were well-organised, he added.

The IGP said if charges could not be preferred, the authorities might consider using the Restricted Residence or Emergency Ordinance to have those responsible for these activities banished to remote districts.

During the first phase of the nationwide crackdown, police seized 151,899 pornographic VCDs and 2.73 million pirated VCDs while 1,046 people were arrested.

On illegal gaming machines, 2,148 premises were checked while 353 arrests were made. Police also seized 5,593 illegal gaming machines.

Police checked 27,000 illegal immigrants and arrested 12,649, including Indonesians (7,000), Filipinos (3,300), Myamar (646) and others (1,703).

On raids on vice dens, police detained 1,124 foreign women.

In Bukit Mertajam, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi urged recording companies to seriously consider lowering the prices of their VCDs and CDs to complement the Government's efforts to eliminate piracy.

"My advice is this: Reduce the price, increase the volume and the returns will be bigger. This is simple economics."

He said if the companies did not heed the advice, they would stand to lose because the public would create a demand for pirated VCDs and CDs.

"If the prices are high, nobody will buy them (original VCDs and CDs)," he said, when commenting on the refusal of companies to reduce prices.

Abdullah was speaking after launching the RM13 million Taman Ara Indah mixed development project in Permatang Pasir, near here.

Present were Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon and his deputy Datuk Dr Hilmi Yahaya.