

Jail term increased for ex-town council GM

CJ allows prosecution's appeal in Ang Mo Kio Town Council officer's corruption case

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A former general manager of Ang Mo Kio Town Council (AMKTC), who is serving 27 months in jail for corruption, will have to spend a longer time in prison after his sentence was raised to three years and three months yesterday.

Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon allowed an appeal by the prosecution to increase the sentence meted out to Wong Chee Meng, 59, who re-

ceived more than \$86,000 in a stream of bribes from Chia Sin Lan, 64, between 2014 and 2016.

Chia is the director of two companies – 19-ANC Enterprise and 19-NS2 Enterprise – which carried out works for town councils. His original sentence of 21 months' jail was also increased yesterday, to two years and nine months.

CJ Menon said Chia derived substantial benefits from his cultivation of Wong. As an insider, Wong was able to intervene in the award of tenders to advance the interests of

Chia's companies, he said.

Wong had abused his position and the high degree of trust reposed in him to commit the offences, said CJ Menon. He did not consider the public disquiet caused by the offences to be an aggravating factor.

"While the offences were undoubtedly serious, involving one of the most senior non-political employees in a town council... the evidence also showed that the scope of the corruption was isolated to just Wong."

Both sides had appealed against the original jail terms meted out by a district judge in November last year.

In May, prosecutors argued for four years' jail for Wong, and three years and eight months' jail for Chia. The lawyers for Wong sought be-

tween 11 and 14 months' jail, while Chia's sought 17 months' jail.

Wong was AMKTC's general manager from 2013 to 2016. He was removed from duty after the town council received a complaint about the way he handled contracts.

In March last year, Wong and Chia each pleaded guilty to three corruption charges part-way through a trial that started in September 2018.

The first charge was over a \$13,500 discount on a Toyota Corolla Altis owned by 19-ANC that was sold to Wong in 2014. The second charge was over \$34,000 in expenses incurred at KTV lounges and massage spas. The third charge was over payments to Wong's mistress totalling about \$27,800.



Wong Chee Meng's (left) jail term was increased to three years and three months, while Chia Sin Lan's term was raised to two years and nine months.

Two other charges over bribes amounting to nearly \$10,800 were taken into consideration.

In his judgment, CJ Menon also set out a sentencing framework for corrupt transactions relating to contracts with the Government or pub-

lic bodies. Under the law, such offences carry a maximum punishment of up to seven years' jail and a fine of up to \$100,000.

He laid out a sentencing matrix to determine the starting point for sentences based on the level of harm caused and the offender's culpability. The sentence is then adjusted to account for factors specific to each offender.

CJ Menon declined to grant the prosecution's application for an order to enforce the payment of a \$23,398.09 penalty imposed on Wong. He said Wong had already been ordered to serve one month's jail in default of payment.

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