

AMK Town Council ex-GM jailed 27 months for bribery

He allowed himself to be cultivated by boss of two construction firms, who also received a jail sentence

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A former general manager of Ang Mo Kio Town Council (AMKTC) was yesterday sentenced to 27 months' jail for allowing himself to be cultivated by the boss of two construction firms, despite knowing it was wrong.

Wong Chee Meng, 59, also known as Victor Wong, received some \$50,000 in bribes from Chia Sin Lan, 64, a director and shareholder of 19-ANC Enterprise and 19-NS2 Enterprise.

Chia, who was sentenced yesterday to 21 months in jail, had given Wong a discount on a car purchase, loaned him money to help his mistress, and also paid for visits to KTV lounges, restaurants, massage spas and a hotel, in hopes of advancing the interests of his companies.

The two firms were each fined \$75,000.

Wong was also told to pay a penalty of \$23,398.09, as disgorgement of his ill-gotten gains.

District Judge John Ng said: "Such a sentence is severe enough... to remind us... that 'absolute probity is demanded of all officers and employees of town councils'. The sentence also signals clearly our zero tolerance for corruption in general and corruption that undermines public administration in particular."

Wong was AMKTC's general manager from 2013 to 2016. He was employed by CPG Facilities Management, which was AMKTC's managing agent.

In September 2016, AMKTC received a complaint about the way he handled contracts. He was removed from duty a month later and was investigated by the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau.

Wong, in December 2014, first asked for a discount on a Toyota Corolla Altis that 19-ANC was looking to sell.

As the two men got closer, Wong asked Chia for loans – once in June 2015 to pay for renovations of his mistress' house in China, and again in November that year to help his mistress after she fell prey to an investment scam.

Between May 2015 and July 2016, Chia also entertained Wong on 29 occasions to the tune of about \$7,000.

This was "a case of cultivation by the giver with mutual benefits in mind", said Judge Ng.

The most serious aspect of what Wong did was in receiving the benefits from Chia, knowing full well they were "laced with a corrupt intent", said the judge.

In doing so, he had allowed himself to become beholden to Chia.

Wong had even reminded his staff to stay corruption-free in their dealings with contractors, the judge said, but "instead of setting a positive example as their supervisor, he had acted hypocritically".

Chia, meanwhile, had shown clear premeditation in the way he went about cultivating Wong, said the judge. He also took steps to conceal his actions by transferring money to China via intermediaries.

Judge Ng said that while Wong

About the case

Wong Chee Meng, 59, the former general manager of Ang Mo Kio Town Council, and Chia Sin Lan, 64, the director and shareholder of construction companies 19-ANC and 19-NS2, were first charged with corruption last year.

Wong is said to have received bribes from Chia in exchange for furthering the interests of Chia's companies, which are contractors of the town council.

Both men had claimed trial. But after two tranches of hearings that started in September last year, the duo decided to plead guilty.

In March, they each pleaded guilty to three charges of corruption, over bribes amounting to more than \$75,300.

The first charge was over a \$13,500 discount on a Toyota Corolla Altis owned by 19-ANC

that was sold to Wong.

The second charge was for offences amalgamated over money sent to Wong's mistress in China, which totalled \$27,800.

The third charge was with regard to expenditure on entertaining Wong at places including KTV lounges and massage parlours, which amounted to more than \$34,000.

Two other charges – the free use of a mobile line which Chia gave Wong, and employment which Chia found for Wong's daughter-in-law – were taken into consideration during sentencing. These bribes amounted to more than \$10,700.

Chia also pleaded guilty to a charge against each of his firms for conspiring to bribe Wong.

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was an employee of a private company, his role required that he exercise some of the powers of the town council, which is a statutory body. Thus, the public interest in preventing a loss of confidence in Singapore's public administration was a factor in sentencing.

But while the two men were guilty of corruption, their actions had not compromised several contracts worth \$9,874,650 awarded to 19-ANC and 19-NS2 between 2014 and 2016, said the judge.

He noted that the two companies had won the contracts through open tenders and had also failed as

often as other contractors in their bids for projects with AMKTC.

"There is no evidence to show that the protocols and processes set in place for the awarding of contracts by the town council were not intact," he said.

Wong and Chia, who chatted outside the court earlier, did not talk to each other after the sentencing. They had a few minutes with family members before being led away to the sounds of sobbing and someone crying out "Take care". Wong teared up, while Chia looked stonily ahead.

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DISTRICT JUDGE JOHN NG



Wong Chee Meng (top), a former general manager of Ang Mo Kio Town Council, received some \$50,000 in bribes from Chia Sin Lan (above), who was sentenced to 21 months in jail.

ZERO TOLERANCE

Singapore adopts a strict zero-tolerance approach towards corruption. It is a serious offence to give or accept bribes from another individual or entity.

CORRUPT PRACTICES INVESTIGATION BUREAU, in a statement.

KEY TO TRUST

Integrity and transparency are key to building trust with residents in the management of the town council. We actively engage staff through meetings and talks on integrity and transparency matters. Staff and town councillors must also declare their interests in shareholdings, directorships and contracts as part and parcel of our administration. All staff are personally responsible for ensuring that their conduct and that of those reporting to them fully complies with the organisation's code of conduct.

ANG MO KIO TOWN COUNCIL SPOKESMAN, in response to media queries on the conclusion of the case.