

Name: Alert ID: TMML2024037498510 SINGAPORE: The founder of Singapore oil trading company Hin Leong was charged in court on Friday (Sep 25) with abetment of forgery for the purpose of cheating, the police said. Lim Oon Kuin, 78, now faces two counts of abetment of forgery, after the first charge on Aug 14. The charge on Friday accuses Lim of instigating Hin Leong contracts executive Freddy Tan Jie Ren to forge an email purportedly sent by Hin Leong Trading to China Aviation Oil (Singapore) on Feb 26 in relation to a sale transaction of Gasoil 10PPM sulphur. "This email, along with the Inter-Tank Transfer certificate mentioned in the first charge, was submitted to a financial institution to secure more than US\$56 million (S\$77 million) in trade financing," police said in a news release. If convicted, Lim could face up to 10 years in jail and a fine for each charge. Investigations are ongoing into the other offences allegedly committed by Lim, the police added. Hin Leong, one of Singapore's largest independent oil traders, is now struggling to repay debts of US\$3.85 billion. Police confirmed in April that they were investigating Hin Leong, after the firm filed for bankruptcy protection amid a revelation from its founder that it had failed to disclose hundreds of millions in losses over several years. Lim had directed the company to hide nearly US\$800 million in losses from speculating oil futures over the years. An affidavit signed by Lim cited the collapse in global oil prices – brought about by the COVID-19 outbreak and a price war among the oil majors – and a lack of hedging policies as some of the factors behind the company's financial distress. The affidavit, which said Mr Lim was resigning immediately as director of the family-held company, did not specify over how many years the losses were incurred. In May, Singaporean shipping firm Ocean Tankers, a unit of Hin Leong, applied to be placed under the management of a court-appointed supervisor. A report filed in June in the High Court later found that the firm had obtained financing from various banks for cargoes of oil that did not exist, complicating the competing claims of ownership.