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THE STRAITS TIMES

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spH media

Iswaran starts 12-month jail term after deciding not to appeal

**Wong Shiying
and Andrew Wong**

Former transport minister S. Iswaran arrived at the State Courts at about 3.30pm on Oct 7 for the start of his 12-month jail sentence.

He was accompanied by a relative as he walked up to Court 4A to surrender himself ahead of the 4pm deadline.

Flanked by his defence team from Davinder Singh Chambers, Iswaran handed over his identity card to court officers.

He then hugged his male relative before he was led to the dock where officers escorted him to the court lock-up facility for his transfer to Changi Prison.

The 62-year-old had revealed at about 1.20pm on Oct 7 that he was not appealing against the sentence handed down by the High Court on Oct 3.

In a statement on Facebook, Iswaran said: "It was important to me that the public prosecutor amended the charges against me under

the Prevention of Corruption Act to those under Section 165 of the Penal Code regarding the acceptance of gifts by public servants.

"I accept that as a minister what I did was wrong under Section 165. I accept full responsibility for my actions and apologise unreservedly to all Singaporeans."

He added that his family's well-being and the emotional toll on his loved ones of a long trial extending well into 2025, and possibly beyond, weighed heavily on him.

"The past 15 months have already been most difficult. With this decision, I hope that we can put the pain and anguish behind us, move forward and rebuild our lives together," he added.

Iswaran thanked those who stood by him and helped him face the probe, saying he was touched by his family's love, prayers and support.

"I am indebted to my friends and grassroots leaders for their unstinting support, faith and encouragement.

"I am grateful to my lawyers and also to the many who have ex-



Former transport minister S. Iswaran (right) leaving the State Courts in a prison van on Oct 7, heading for Changi Prison. ST PHOTO: KELVIN CHNG



PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO

pressed their concern and support for me, in person and through social media," he said, adding that serving his constituents and Singaporeans over the past three decades has been the greatest honour of his life.

"As this chapter of my life comes

to a close, my family and I look to the future with gratitude and renewed hope," he added.

Iswaran was sentenced to jail after he pleaded guilty to five charges. They comprise four charges of obtaining valuable items as a public servant from Ong Beng Seng, chair-

man of Formula One race promoter Singapore GP, and Mr David Lum Kok Seng, managing director of construction company Lum Chang Holdings.

The fifth charge was for obstructing the course of justice by making payment of \$5,700 for a business-

class flight he had taken from Doha to Singapore in 2022 at Ong's expense. Iswaran made the payment to throw off the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau, which found his name in a flight manifest it had seized while investigating Ong's associates.

The jail term meted out to Iswaran was almost double the six to seven months' jail the prosecution had sought. His lawyer, Senior Counsel Davinder Singh, had asked for not more than eight weeks' jail.

In sentencing Iswaran, Justice Vincent Hoong said the prosecution and defence had asked for "manifestly inadequate" jail terms.

The judge said general deterrence, aimed at setting an example for others who commit offences, was the primary consideration in his sentencing decision.

He added that Iswaran, as a minister and chairman of the Formula One steering committee, wielded influence in matters of great public interest, even if there was no evidence the gifts had influenced decisions over Formula One or its contracts.

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