

Ex-HDB inspector jailed for forgery committed in 1987

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A housing and maintenance inspector colluded with a subcontractor to forge work orders to deceive the Housing Board (HDB) into believing that the works had been checked and approved, so they would be paid.

Malaysian Hew Chong Wai's crimes finally caught up with him yesterday – 30 years after they were committed.

Hew was 23 when he fled Singapore in 1987 before charges could be served on him. He went on the run without his passport until May this year, when he was arrested by Malaysian police during a routine check in Seremban, and repatriated to Singapore to stand trial.

Hew had received about \$23,000 from the subcontractor, Tan Kiam Hock, for the 128 fraudulent work orders. Yesterday, he was given 42 weeks' jail on 18 counts of forgery in February and March 1987.

Tan, now 57, had been jailed four months in 1988 after admitting to abetting Hew by submitting the forged work orders for payment. Another 110 similar charges were taken into consideration.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Sanjiv Vaswani said Hew was an inspector

attached to HDB's Clementi West Area Office and Tan was a subcontractor for Yaw Eng Construction.

The Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau received information on March 16, 1987 that Hew had issued 12 work orders signed off by two HDB officers. Investigations showed the signatures of the two officers had been forged. The work orders amounted to payment of \$16,100 but checks found the works had not been carried out. Neither was work done on six other forged work orders involving \$8,915.

The prosecution said Hew had hatched the plan some time in 1987 to obtain money through such fraudulent means. He was abetted by Tan, who would claim payments on these work orders from Yaw Eng Construction.

For the 18 forged work orders, Tan received a total of \$21,763. Of the total of \$53,602 due to Tan for all 128 work orders, Tan later paid Hew a total of \$22,960 on three occasions. Based on the January–April 2017 Consumer Price Index figures, the estimated corresponding value of \$22,960 is \$38,909.

District Judge Kenneth Yap back-dated Hew's sentence to May 13. He could have been jailed for up to seven years on each charge.

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