

10 weeks' jail for manager fined for taking bribes

This is a case of private-sector graft that warrants jail, says Chief Justice

By SELINA LUM

A BUILDING manager initially fined \$47,500 for demanding bribes from a cleaning company boss in exchange for not complaining about his services will now have to spend 10 weeks in jail.

The prosecution on Thursday succeeded in its appeal for Tai Ai Poh, 54, to be jailed on 25 corruption and two falsification charges.

Besides collecting \$22,800 in bribes over three years, Tai also instigated a cleaner to falsify attendance books, creating the impression that two cleaners were working when there was only one.

In sending Tai to jail, Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon agreed with prosecutors that this was a case of private-sector corruption that warranted a jail term.

In this case, the giver of the bribe, sole proprietor Yusof Razak, was not seeking something that he was not otherwise entitled to, he said. On the contrary, Mr Yusof was worse off financially and was faced with the prospect of being denied the right to do what he was entitled to do under the cleaning contract.

The Chief Justice said the district judge was wrong to find that Tai's falsification was unsophisticated and not for personal gain.

As manager of two industrial buildings in Bukit Batok, Tai evaluated the performance of the gar-

deners, security guards and cleaners who worked there.

He also had a say on whether the contractors providing these services should be changed.

In August 2006, Tai suggested to Mr Yusof to cut down the number of night-shift cleaners, who were paid \$450 to \$500 each, from two to one so that they could use the money for drinking and karaoke instead.

When Mr Yusof declined, Tai asked him directly for money. Mr Yusof agreed, out of fear that Tai would give negative feedback about his firm's services, thus jeopardising the renewal of his contract.

Tai instructed Mr Yusof to pass fortnightly payments of \$300 to a cleaner who would then hand the money to Tai at a secluded spot.

Tai also told the cleaner to sign in and out for a fictitious cleaner, to hide the fact that there was only one cleaner.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Navin Naidu said this was not a typical case of corruption that led to mutual benefit - Mr Yusof suffered a financial loss by paying Tai \$600 a month, instead of hiring a cleaner for less.

The DPP argued that Tai did gain from doctoring the records because it covered up his past acts and allowed him to continue his bribery racket.

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