

Ex-sales exec helped 2 cheat on GST refunds

By **ELENA CHONG**
COURT CORRESPONDENT

A FORMER sales executive was jailed for two years and ordered to pay penalties yesterday for corruption and abetting in goods and services tax fraud involving tourist refunds.

Lim Pheok Aun, who faced 23 charges under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Act and nine for corruption, is the sixth and last person to be dealt with in the scam. The 50-year-old bankrupt admitted to nine charges.

He was ordered to pay a penalty of \$724 under the Prevention of Corruption Act, and a penalty of another \$27,170, which is three times the tax undercharged.

A district court heard that Soon Huat Goldsmith in Serangoon Road, where Lim worked, is a retailer participating in the electronic Tourist Refund Scheme (eTRS).

This allows tourists who visit Singapore and buy goods from participating GST-registered retailers to obtain a refund of the GST paid for goods bought upon their departure.

To claim the refund, the applicant has to produce invoices or receipts showing the amount paid for the goods. The retailer will then issue the tourist with an eTRS ticket generated from a terminal in the shop.

Investigation showed that Lim had corruptly accepted bribes in the form of bottles of DOM wine and cash from Indian nationals Sundar Panneer Selvam, 46, and Baskaran Uthirapathy, 28. In return, he would falsely enter their particulars as buyers of the items in the receipts, so they could get refunds they were not entitled to.

He knew they were not the real buyers of the items in the receipts when they presented these to him between November 2013 and January last year.

Recently, former higher Customs officer Mohamed Yusof Abdul Rahman, 67, was jailed for five years for aiding four Indian nationals to commit GST fraud and for corruption. He was also ordered to pay penalties.

The Indian nationals have been jailed between three and four years each and ordered to pay penalties.

✉ elena@sph.com.sg

Source: The Straits Times © Singapore Press Holdings Limited. Permission required for reproduction.