

Businessman, former BP manager get 4½ years' jail each for graft

Both have appealed against their convictions and sentences, and are out on bail

David Sun

A former manager at oil giant BP and a businessman were each sentenced to 4½ years' jail yesterday for their roles in a graft case involving close to US\$4 million (S\$5.3 million).

Clarence Chang Peng Hong, 56,

had accepted bribes from businessman Koh Seng Lee, 59, on 19 occasions between July 2006 and July 2010 in exchange for advancing the business interests of Koh's company with BP.

Koh had also corruptly agreed to pay \$500,000 to a pre-school – Mindchamps Preschool @ City Square – where Chang's wife was a director.

They were found guilty of 20 corruption charges each last year after a trial spanning more than two years.

The duo were handed jail terms of 54 months yesterday, and Chang was additionally ordered to pay a penalty of more than \$6 million or 28 months' jail in default.

During the trial, the court heard that Koh had set up a marine fuel

trading company, Pacific Prime Trading (PPT), based on Chang's suggestion.

The prosecution said the two had a mutual understanding from the start that Chang would use his position in BP Singapore to advance PPT's interest, in return for a share of PPT's profits.

The prosecution also argued that Koh knew Chang had the power to

“make or break” PPT, and felt compelled to accede to Chang's requests for payments.

The defence counsel for the two men had argued that the funds transferred between the two were for joint investments in property and in Mindchamps, and were wholly unrelated to PPT's business with BP Singapore.

But District Judge Ong Chin Rhu

said the accounts of joint investments were an afterthought.

For each charge of corruption, Koh and Chang could have been jailed for up to five years and fined up to \$100,000.

Both of them have filed appeals against their convictions and sentences, and are out on bail.

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Clarence Chang Peng Hong, a former manager at oil giant BP, arriving at the State Courts yesterday. Besides the 4½ year jail term, he was also ordered to pay a penalty of more than \$6 million or serve 28 months' jail in default. ST PHOTO: KELVIN CHNG

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