

7 weeks' jail for doing old friend a 'favour'

By OLIVIA HO

AN ADMIN worker who agreed to do a favour for an old national-service friend became embroiled in an illegal scheme to help foreign "hostesses" renew their social visit passes.

Mohammad Ghazali Hashim Abdul Rahman was paid just \$50 for his trouble – and yesterday he was jailed seven weeks for abetting corruption.

The 31-year-old is the last of seven men to be convicted in a "U-turn" operation masterminded by corrupt Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA) officer Mohammed Mustaffa Mohabat Ali.

On Mustaffa's request, Ghazali would meet the women, usually from the Philippines or Vietnam, at Jurong East bus interchange and accompany them across the border to the Gelang Patah bus terminus in Malaysia.

On returning to Singapore through the Tuas checkpoint, he would guide them towards the booth manned by Mustaffa.

The women, having entered Singapore on a social visit pass, would leave for Malaysia right before their passes expired and then return within a few days to obtain a fresh pass, which they bribed Mustaffa to turn a blind eye to.

Ghazali saw none of the \$3,000 that Mustaffa collected from the women he guided, but received a token sum of \$50 to cover his expenses.

The court heard that Ghazali helped Mustaffa five times between November 2010 and April 2011.

In mitigation, Ghazali's lawyer, Mr Sunil Sudheesan, said his client was "a very naive...person who was just helping his friend", and had not played a critical role in the operation.

District Judge Janet Wang also ordered Ghazali to pay a penalty of \$50.

Mustaffa, 30, was jailed for 21 months in 2013, while four other ICA officers and pub owner Andrew Song were given prison terms last year for corruption. For abetting corruption, Ghazali could have been jailed up to five years, fined \$100,000, or both.

✉ oliviahos@sph.com.sg

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