

Man gets 90 weeks' jail, \$1.1m penalty for corruption

A former Petrochemical Corporation of Singapore (PCS) marketing and sales executive was jailed for 90 weeks and ordered to pay a penalty of \$1.13 million yesterday for corruption.

Low Chin Yuen, 52, pleaded guilty last month to 40 of 122 charges of accepting cash bribes from VLK Traders directors between 2003 and 2014.

The total amount involved in all the charges is about US\$800,000

(S\$1.1 million), which he accepted as rewards to advance the business interests of VLK with PCS.

VLK provides chemical transportation services to the manufacturing company through its fleet of vessels, among other businesses.

In 2003, VLK secured a petrol chemical shipping contract awarded by PCS to ship toluene and xylene overseas.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Jasmin Kaur said Low had invited VLK to

submit a quote as part of his duties, which included evaluating the quotations received and recommending vendors to his management.

VLK, which Low had recommended, submitted the lowest quote among its competitors and was eventually awarded the contract and every subsequent contract.

VLK paid Low US\$500 or US\$1,000 on a few occasions shortly before the first contract was awarded. After clinching the contract, VLK began making monthly payments ranging from US\$1,293 to US\$14,125 to Low.

After the first contract, VLK was awarded subsequent contracts for the shipment of the two products, said DPP Kaur.

Low's offences came to light in 2014. Between 2003 and 2014, he accepted bribes that totalled US\$797,415.

District Judge Ong Chin Rhu said

the facts of the case clearly called for a custodial sentence to be imposed. She disagreed with counsel that the custodial threshold had not been breached.

Low's lawyer Suresh Damodara said in mitigation that his client, who is now unemployed, had always been a "spectacular performer" at PCS.

"He never compromised PCS' interests in any way whatsoever throughout his 21-year career with PCS," he added.

He said Low knew that it was wrong for him to accept money from VLK, but he never asked the company for any money or reward, nor did he dictate to VLK what was to be paid to him.

As Low cannot pay the penalty, he will serve another 10 months behind bars.

Elena Chong

Major graft cases

The biggest graft case here to date is that of former Public Utilities Board deputy chief executive Choy Hon Tim, who was jailed for 14 years in November 1995 for corruptly receiving \$13.85 million in bribes.

He was arrested after the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau was tipped off that the then 58-year-old senior civil servant had taken millions in kickbacks from contractors when he was the PUB's chief electrical engineer.

In exchange for the bribes, he gave them information that helped them win PUB contracts.

In one of the largest cases of

private-sector corruption, former Ikea food services manager Leng Kah Poh, 55, was given 98 weeks' jail and ordered to pay a penalty of \$2.3 million in 2014.

He had conspired with two others to skim millions of dollars off inflated contracts to supply food to furniture giant Ikea between 2003 and 2009.

Leng succeeded in his appeal against conviction and was cleared in 2013, but the Court of Appeal restored his original sentence after overturning the acquittal in November 2014.

Elena Chong