

Four persons, including two former general managers of Centaline Property Agency Limited (Centaline), were today (Tuesday) sentenced to jail terms up to 40 months for their roles in a bribery and fraud scam.

Mark Chan Ngan-lau, 48, Centaline's former general manager, who pleaded guilty to three counts of offering advantages and one count of conspiracy to defraud, was sentenced to 40 months' imprisonment.

Co-defendant Ho Wai-jon, 51, former general manager of Li & Fung (Trading) Limited, was sentenced to three years' imprisonment after being convicted of one count of agent accepting an advantage.

Another former Centaline general manager, Poon Chi-ming, 44, who was convicted of two counts of conspiracy to defraud, received a 22-month jail term; while Lau Sau-yu, 38, estate agent of Centaline, who was found guilty of one count of conspiracy to defraud, was sentenced to 10 months' imprisonment.

In passing sentence, District Court Deputy Judge Albert Wong Sung-hau noted that the defendants' acts constituted a breach of trust, and warranted custodial sentences.

The court heard that Chan had admitted having offered \$1.41 million to Ho as rewards for commissioning Centaline as an agent in three property transactions.

Ho, who had been assigned by Li & Fung Group to handle property transactions, was found to have accepted \$800,000 in bribes from Chan on August 11, 2006 as a reward for engaging Centaline as an agent in the purchase of a \$240 million industrial building on Cheung Sha Wan Road.

The court also heard that Poon and Lau had falsely represented to Centaline between March 8 and 22, 2006 that Tommy Electric Company was entitled to a referral fee of \$331,707 for the purchase of a property at The Aegean on Castle Peak Road in Tuen Mun.

Poon had also conspired with Chan Ngan-lau and another Centaline agent between September 26 and October 6, 2005 to make a false representation to Centaline that Royal Regency Investment Limited was entitled to a referral fee of \$275,000 for the purchase of a Fa Yuen Street property.

The court heard that both companies were not involved in the said transactions.

The prosecution was today represented by Wong Po-wing and assisted by ICAC officer Ben Chan.