

**Six sentenced for defrauding SFAA of \$7.5m student loans****26.11.10**

Six persons, who were masterminds charged by the ICAC, were today (Friday) sentenced to various jail terms at the District Court for conspiracy to defraud the Student Financial Assistance Agency (SFAA) of Non-means Tested Loans (NTLs) totalling over \$7.5 million.

Chau Yim-keung, 50, a shareholder-cum-director of ACCOM Corporation Limited (ACCOM), and Poon Hoo-fai, 48, a business development manager of ACCOM, each received a jail term of four and a half years.

Deputy Judge Ada Yim Shun-ye ordered that six of the 18-month jail term earlier given to Chau at Kwun Tong Magistracy for his involvement in another similar case to run consecutively to the above sentence, making Chau a total of five years in jail.

Co-defendant So Pui-san, 43, a sales manageress of ACCOM, was sentenced to 33 months' imprisonment, and ordered to pay the government a compensation of \$150,000.

Li Yun-ping, 44, a middleman, was jailed for 15 months, while Lau Shui-keung, 55, a middleman, was sentenced to six months' imprisonment, suspended for 12 months.

Lee Hip-chung, 34, also a middleman, was jailed for six months. He had two of the four-month jail term imposed on him at Kowloon City Magistracy for his involvement in a third similar case run consecutively to today's sentence, thus making him to serve a total of eight months in jail.

In sentencing, the judge said custodial sentences were imposed on the defendants in view of the premeditated and organised fraud scam.

Lee earlier pleaded guilty to a joint charge of conspiracy to defraud, while the remaining defendants were convicted after trial of the same offence.

The case arose from a corruption complaint. Subsequent ICAC enquiries revealed the above conspiracy offence.

The court heard that ITK Education and Development Centre (IEDC) was a subsidiary of ACCOM. Between March and May 2008, Chau arranged IEDC to organise a professional certificate in management course, which was registered under the NTL scheme.

During the same period, the SFAA received a total of 459 NTL applications from course students, each applying for a maximum loan amount of \$75,000 under the scheme.

Chau asked other defendants to recruit bogus students to enrol in the course. Amongst the bogus students were two ICAC undercover agents, who were told that they were not required to attend classes, and were to be paid \$30,000 to \$40,000 as commissions.

As a result, the SFAA was defrauded of NTLs totalling over \$7.5 million, the court was told.

Apart from the above six defendants, the ICAC had also charged 41 other persons for their respective roles in defrauding the SFAA of NTLs. Of them, Alice Chan Chi-yan, a bogus student, had absconded, and a warrant for her arrest was issued. The remaining 40 defendants were convicted of their respective offences, and sentenced to various jail terms up to four months, probation orders as well as community service orders.

The SFAA had rendered full assistance to the ICAC in its investigation.

The prosecution was today represented by prosecuting counsel Liza Yip, assisted by ICAC officer Matthew Chang.