

Nine months' jail for soliciting advantages over herbs orders

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A former senior warehouse operator of a herbal tea manufacturer, charged by the ICAC, was today (Thursday) sentenced to nine months' imprisonment at Tsuen Wan Magistracy for soliciting advantages, namely two loans amounting to RMB16,000, from a supplier for awarding him more purchase orders for herbs.

Lau Tam-sang, 24, formerly employed by Hung Fook Tong Holdings Limited (HFT), was earlier found guilty of two counts of agent soliciting an advantage, contrary to Section 9(1)(a) of the Prevention of Bribery Ordinance.

In sentencing, Magistrate Mr Lambert Lee Ka-chai said the defendant deserved a custodial sentence in view of the seriousness of his bribery offences.

The magistrate also reprimanded the defendant for having shown no remorse.

The court heard that HFT, a herbal tea manufacturer in Hong Kong, sources herbs and related materials from various Mainland suppliers.

While employed by HFT, the defendant was responsible for monitoring the stock of herbal materials and advising his superiors on the purchase of those materials.

Between August and September last year, the defendant used his mobile phone to send several text messages to a herbal supplier, requesting a loan of RMB6,000.

While asking the supplier to deposit the money into a bank account of his wife, the defendant indicated that he would give the supplier more business. But the supplier did not respond to the request.

The court also heard that on another occasion between September and October last year, the defendant sent other text messages to the supplier, asking for another loan of RMB10,000.

As the supplier did not make any response, the defendant threatened to reduce purchase orders to be awarded to him.

The supplier did not accede to the defendant's requests for loans as he considered the demands amounted to corruption. The supplier subsequently reported the matter to HFT, the court was told.

HFT had rendered full assistance to the ICAC in its investigation.

The prosecution was today represented by prosecuting counsel Peter Tse, assisted by ICAC officer Edwin Tsang.