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Duo guilty of \$3.6m school donations fraud and laundering crime proceeds

2017-5-11

A former assistant admissions officer of an international school and her boyfriend, charged by the ICAC, were today (May 11) convicted at the District Court of defrauding and attempting to defraud three parents of donations totalling \$3.6 million in relation to the admission of their children to the school, and laundering the related crime proceeds respectively.

Chu Lau-ying, 27, former assistant admissions officer of Harrow International School Hong Kong (Harrow HK), was found guilty of three charges – two of fraud, contrary to Section 16A of the Theft Ordinance, and one of attempted fraud, contrary to Section 16A of the Theft Ordinance and 159G of the Crimes Ordinance.

Co-defendant Ng Mei-chuen, 25, leathersmith, was found guilty of two counts of dealing with property known or reasonably believed to represent proceeds of an indictable offence, contrary to Section 25(1) of the Organized and Serious Crimes Ordinance.

Deputy Judge Ms Winnie Lau Yee-wan adjourned the case to May 31 this year for sentence, pending background reports. The defendants were remanded in the custody of the Correctional Services Department.

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

The court heard that at the material time, Chu was an assistant admissions officer of Harrow HK, an international school operating classes from kindergarten one to year 13. She was responsible for processing applications for admissions to Harrow HK and arranging suitable applicants for interviews. Ng was then her boyfriend and now her husband.

In late April 2015, Chu told a mother that she was required to pay \$600,000 as sponsorship to Harrow HK in order to get a confirmation of admission for her daughter. In the belief that the sponsorship was genuine, the mother acceded to the request and issued a cheque for \$600,000.

Chu also told the mother that a director of Harrow HK, surnamed Ng, would issue a receipt to the mother afterwards. But investigation revealed that the cheque was subsequently deposited into Ng's account held with a bank.

On February 29, 2016, Chu called another mother to tell her that the result of her daughter's interview was fair, and the chance of her daughter being admitted to Harrow HK was slim. If she agreed to donate \$1.5 million to \$2.5 million to the Shanghai branch of Harrow International School (Harrow SH), her daughter would be given priority for admission to Harrow HK.

After consideration, the mother decided to donate \$1.5 million on condition that her daughter would be admitted to Harrow HK immediately. The mother later received a notification from Harrow HK that her daughter was admitted.

On March 4, 2016, Chu called the mother and urged her to prepare a cheque for \$1.5 million payable to Ng, whom Chu claimed was a senior officer of Harrow HK.

A few days later, the mother passed the cheque to Chu when she visited Harrow HK. When the mother asked Chu for a donation receipt, Chu refused to do so, giving the reason that the donation was made to Harrow SH in the mother's private capacity.

On the same day, Ng caused the cheque to be deposited into his account with another bank.

The court also heard that Chu informed a third mother on February 26, 2016 that her daughter ranked low in the waiting list of the admission exercise, but the chance could be enhanced if the mother agreed to the proposal of donating \$1.5 million to \$2.5 million to Harrow SH.

The mother revealed the matter to an assistant registrar of Harrow HK, but the assistant registrar replied that there was no such proposal from Harrow HK.

Harrow HK confirmed that there was no donation or sponsorship programme at the school entitling a donor admission priority. Investigation also revealed that Ng was never a director or senior officer of Harrow HK or Harrow SH.

Harrow HK had rendered full assistance to the ICAC during its investigation.

The prosecution was today represented by prosecuting counsel Marco Li, assisted by ICAC officer Caroline Yu.

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新聞公佈

二人分別詐騙學校捐款三百六十萬元及洗黑錢罪成候判

2017年5月11日

一名國際學校前助理入學主任及其男朋友，分別詐騙及企圖詐騙三名家長共三百六十萬元捐款以讓其孩子入讀該校，以及清洗相關犯罪收益，早前被廉政公署起訴。被告今日(五月十一日)在區域法院被裁定罪名成立。

朱柳英，二十七歲，哈羅國際學校香港分校(哈羅香港)前助理入學主任，被裁定三項罪名成立，即兩項欺詐，違反《盜竊罪條例》第16A條，及一項企圖欺詐，違反《盜竊罪條例》第16A條及《刑事罪行條例》第159G條。

同案被告吳美全，二十五歲，皮匠，被裁定一項罪名成立，即處理已知道或有合理理由相信為代表從可公訴罪行得益的財產，違反《有組織及嚴重罪行條例》第25(1)條。

暫委法官劉綺雲將案件押後至本年五月三十一日判刑，以待被告的背景報告。被告暫時還押懲教署看管。

廉署早前接獲貪污投訴，調查後揭發上述罪行。

案情透露，朱於案發時是哈羅香港的助理入學主任。該國際學校開設由幼稚園一年班至第十三班的班級，而朱則負責處理入學申請及揀選合適的申請人參加面試。吳當時是朱的男朋友，現在是其丈夫。

朱於二〇一五年四月底告訴一名母親，她需要向哈羅香港提供一筆六十萬元贊助，以便確認其女兒獲取錄。該母親信以為真，答應有關贊助要求並簽發一張六十萬元的支票。

朱又向該母親表示，一名吳姓哈羅香港校董其後會向她發出收據。惟調查顯示，該支票其後存入了吳一個銀行戶口。

朱於二〇一六年二月二十九日致電另一名母親，表示其女兒入學面試表現一般，獲取錄機會不高。如她向哈羅國際學校上海分校(哈羅上海)捐款一百五十萬元至二百五十萬元，其女兒便會獲哈羅香港優先取錄。

該母親考慮後決定捐贈一百五十萬元，條件是可獲哈羅香港即時取錄。她其後接獲通知，其女兒已獲哈羅香港取錄。

朱於二〇一六年三月四日致電該母親，敦促對方準備一張收款人為吳的一百五十萬元支票。朱聲稱吳是哈羅香港的高層人員。

該母親數天後到哈羅香港把支票交給朱。該母親要求朱發出捐款收據，但朱以其捐款是私人捐贈給哈羅上海為理由而拒絕。吳於同日致使支票存入他另一個銀行戶口。

案情又透露，朱於二〇一六年二月二十六日通知第三名母親，表示其女兒在輪候名單上排在較後位置。不過，如果她答應捐款一百五十萬元至二百五十萬元贊助哈羅上海，其女兒獲取錄的機會將會增加。

該母親向哈羅香港的助理註冊主任透露有關事宜，對方表示該校並無建議捐款。

哈羅香港證實從來沒有捐款或贊助計劃讓捐款人獲優先取錄。調查又顯示，吳從來不是哈羅香港或哈羅上海的校董或高層人員。

哈羅香港在廉署調查案件期間提供全面協助。

控方今日由大律師李國威代表出庭，並由廉署人員余慧明協助。

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