

Singapore official gets jail sentence in sex case

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Former top civil servant Peter Lim (left) arrives with his lawyer at the Subordinate courts in Singapore. Lim received a prison sentence on Thursday. Photo: AFP

A judge sentenced Singapore's former chief of emergency services to six months in jail on Thursday for accepting an offer of sex from a woman who sought business favours.

Corruption convictions involving senior government officials are rare in this city-state that prides itself on facing very few graft cases compared to some of its Southeast Asian neighbours.

Peter Lim, former commissioner of Singapore's Civil Defence Force, was found guilty last month of receiving oral sex in May 2010 from a woman who wanted government contracts.

District court judge Hamidah Ibrahim imposed a six-month jail sentence on Thursday, saying a mere fine "would not be appropriate as it would trivialize the severity of corruption."

"Every misdemeanour that a public servant commits ... unfairly casts a negative light on the public service as a whole," she said.

Lim remained free on bail pending an appeal. He had been the commissioner of the main government agency responsible for emergency and rescue services including firefighting.

During his trial, Lim claimed the sex occurred in a "spontaneous" manner after the woman begged him. Lim's lawyer pointed out that no contracts were later awarded to the woman's firm.

Lim recently acknowledged he also had trysts with two other women who worked for companies that were technology suppliers for the Civil Defense Force.



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The maximum penalty for corruption is a five-year sentence and a fine of US\$79,500.

Though rare, Singapore has seen a handful of high-profile graft cases over the past year, often involving people accused of sexual misconduct.

A former law professor was last week sentenced to five months in jail for accepting sex and gifts from a student in exchange for giving her good grades, while the former chief of Singapore's Central Narcotics Bureau was acquitted of also corruptly obtaining sexual favours in February.

"The recent cases suggest greater awareness of corruption by Singaporeans as well as the constant threat of corruption," said Eugene Tan, a law professor at the Singapore Management University. "The prosecution of cases point to the government's determination to ensure that corruption is kept at bay."