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'FRONT RUNNING' INSIDER DEALING

Couple escape jail in AG Chambers' appeal

No stiffer penalty as CJ disagrees \$120k fine 'not substantial'

A MARRIED couple convicted of a form of insider dealing avoided a prison sentence yesterday after an appeal by prosecutors was dismissed.

Trader Wong Cui Lin, 27, and her husband Fan Ying Kit, 30, were fined \$120,000 between them in April after she was caught tipping him off about deals in advance.

The Attorney-General's Chambers appealed for a stiffer sentence, saying the fine was "not substantial at all" and would not deter others.

Yesterday, Chief Justice Chan Sek Keong disagreed. He pointed out that the couple had lost their livelihoods. They also made less than \$25,000 in illegal profits,

which was below the \$30,000 threshold for a custodial sentence.

Wong sobbed loudly in court after the appeal was dismissed.

The couple were dating when they committed the offences between December 2007 and June the following year.

Wong worked for UBS Securities, where her job involved carrying out electronic trades for clients.

First, she would tip off Fan, an assistant manager at Phillip Securities. Then he would buy or sell shares using his mother's account.

This practice is called "front running", and it was the first time anyone had been caught doing it in Singapore.

The couple pleaded guilty to conspiring to deceive the trading houses and carrying out unauthorised transactions.

Their lawyer argued at the time that Fan was hoping to build

up his mother's retirement account and that front running was rampant among his colleagues.

Yesterday, Deputy Public Prosecutor James Lee argued that the couple's crimes deserved a stiffer sentence because they represented an abuse of their positions.

He added that they had been "benefiting themselves at the expense of their clients".

A strong deterrent sentence was needed to stop others from copying them, he said.

Wong cried throughout the proceedings. Her family was in court to support her and her husband.

The couple have lost their jobs. It is not known whether they have found new ones.

They each could have been jailed for up to a year and fined up to \$100,000 for front running.

Unauthorised trading carries a maximum penalty of up to seven years in prison, a \$250,000 fine, or both.

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