

Art manager sentenced for deceiving wages from painters at Noah's Ark project**25.05.09**

An art manager of a contractor, charged by the ICAC, was today (Monday) sentenced at Tsuen Wan Magistracy for deceiving a total of over \$52,000 in wages from three painters at the Noah's Ark project.

Lee Choo-eng, 26, an art manager of WLS Contractors Limited (WLS), was jailed by Magistrate Mr Anthony Yuen Wai-ming for four months, suspended for one year, and fined a total of \$15,000.

The defendant earlier pleaded guilty to three counts of fraud. The prosecution offered no evidence to a similar fraud charge against her.

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

The court heard that at the time of the offences, the defendant was an art manager of WLS. She was entrusted to manage the Noah's Ark project in Ma Wan, including sourcing skilled persons to work as contract theme painters.

Between March and December 2008, WLS employed a person to work as a theme painter at the project and paid him a total of over \$189,000 at a wage of \$1,000 per day.

The defendant falsely represented to the painter that the wage paid to him by WLS was \$800 per day and that he had been over-paid by WLS. Hence, the painter returned to the defendant 20 per cent of his wages, amounting to about \$37,800.

The court also heard that in April 2008, through the introduction of the defendant, another person agreed to come to Hong Kong and worked as a theme painter at the project at a wage of \$800 per day. In fact, WLS offered \$1,000 per day.

In September 2008, WLS agreed to raise the painter's daily wage from \$1,000 to \$1,200. But the defendant falsely represented to the painter that the difference of \$200 was part of her salaries.

Between October 2008 and January this year, WLS paid the painter wages totalling over \$110,000. The defendant then received from the painter part of his wages at a total sum of \$18,000, \$7,500 of which was marked money.

The court heard that WLS also employed a third theme painter at a rate of \$1,000 a day.

In December 2008, the defendant proposed that the wage of the painter be raised to \$1,100 per day. The pay rise was approved by the management of WLS.

The defendant falsely represented to the painter that he was paid \$900 a day for a total of 19 working days.

The painter cashed a cheque issued by WLS, and handed over \$20,900 to the defendant. After giving the painter a sum of \$17,100 as his wages, the defendant pocketed the difference of \$3,800, the court was told.

The prosecution was today represented by prosecuting counsel Carol Fung, assisted by ICAC officer Samuel Siu.