

NEW STRAITS TIMES

ESTABLISHED 1845

CBT case: Directors cry foul

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — It seemed somewhat irregular: two directors, involved in a civil suit, were thrown into remand recently and forced to sign documents and cheques amounting to RM690,000 before they were released from custody.

Tham Hua Kong and Lee Chee Ming now claim they fear for their lives and have been in hiding since their release on Nov 8, from the Bandar Puchong Jaya police station.

They spent three nights in the lock-up.

Their ordeal began on Nov 5 when they were taken into custody by police and brought to the Petaling Jaya Selatan police station in Seri Kembangan. Their arrests, they were told, were related to a criminal breach of trust case on insurance claims.

Handcuffed, the two were instead questioned on other matters, and were surprised to see a former friend who

was involved in a civil suit with them and his lawyer in the station.

A remand order was obtained, and the two were held at Bandar Puchong Jaya police station for three nights.

Lee said on the third day, they were forced to sign documents prepared by the lawyer, which included transfer of shares.

"We were forced to also agree that all

□ TURN TO PAGE 6, COL 4

Dispute involved RM66m JBA contract

□ FROM PAGE 1

police reports that we lodged be withdrawn. Our handcuffs were only removed so that we could sign the documents and cheques amounting to RM690,000 after which they were placed on our wrists again," he said.

He said they felt intimidated when the lawyer told them to put their signatures on paper in the presence of a police inspector.

"We were told we were not in a position to negotiate," added Lee.

They said their civil suit stemmed from a 20-year business relationship with a former friend which turned sour over a RM66 million Jabatan Bekalan Air contract.

They claimed in police presence they were coerced into issuing cheques for RM690,000 to "settle" the civil disputes at a police inspector's office in Petaling Jaya Selatan.

Tham and Lee claimed they were told that no cheating charges would be preferred against them should the cheques be honoured.

Acting Selangor chief police officer Datuk Kamarulzaman Itam declined knowledge of the incident, and instructed PJS police chief Assistant Commissioner Mohd Fuad Talib to respond.

Fuad confirmed that two men were arrested following a cheating report lodged by a businessman from Kelantan and added that the three individuals involved in the dispute met to settle the matter.

"They agreed to settle the matter amicably — one party issued cheques, while the other withdrew the report lodged."

He confirmed he was aware that another report had been lodged by the two directors at the Sentul police station following their release on bail.



FEAR FOR THEIR LIVES: Tham (left) and Lee with the documents involved in the case.

We will hold an inquiry to look into their claims.'

Fuad

"We will hold an inquiry to look into their claims," said Fuad, adding the police did not force anyone to issue cheques.

Tham and Lee fear retribution as they have ordered the bank to cease payment on the 25 cheques issued for the settlement demanded.

Saying that they were willing to face whatever action in court, the two demanded that intimidation and threats by certain "policemen and their higher ups" must stop.

"The contracts involve a large amount of money," said the two who are attached with water treatment companies Oxidant Technology and Selby Engineering as a

director and service manager respectively.

Accompanied by their Kuala Lumpur-based lawyers, Lee, who said he had not seen his children for almost a month, alleged friendship among the three went awry when he and Tham uncovered what was believed to be a fraud case.

Three companies were involved in JBA contracts awarded for projects in Gemenech (worth RM61 million) and Kuala Pilah (RM5.6 million).

One of the companies went into receivership last March, and this led to claims of signatures being forged and unscrupulous JBA employees allegedly in cohorts to transfer payments to "third" companies.

Two reports were lodged at Puchong police station on July 5, with the names of several individuals, including those from JBA, included in the reports.

We were appointed to act for Lee & Tham while they were in police custody.