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Couple jailed for cheating bank of \$1.7m



Anita Said, a former clerk with OCBC, processed fake invoices from the courier firm she and Ragamatthulla Meeran Gani set up. They cheated the bank of more than \$1.7 million, and were sentenced to 5 1/2 years' jail each.

WITH business off to a slow start, courier firm owner Ragamatthulla Meeran Gani devised a plan with his girlfriend to get more money by billing her employer for fictitious deliveries.

Then a clerk with OCBC Bank, Anita Said, 37, was in an ideal position to get the courier "invoices" processed for payment undetected. Between December 2002 and October 2007, the pair hit the bank with 750 false invoices and pocketed a total of \$1,772,465.

But their false dealings came unstuck last year. Yesterday, they were sentenced to 5 1/2 years' jail each.

The court had heard last Friday that Anita joined OCBC in 1999. In February 2002, her job scope entailed processing invoices from the bank's suppliers and service providers for payment purposes.

That September, she and Ragamatthulla set up courier firm Bushido X'Prez & Logistic Services.

The company had only one motorcycle. To pay for more vehicles, Ragamatthulla suggested that they bill OCBC for fictitious mass deliveries of brochures and prospectuses to the bank's branches.

Anita was game as she was confident that no one at OCBC would check if the deliveries had really been made.

She was spot on. The couple went on to cheat the bank for the next five years.

They spent most of the ill-gotten money on building their courier firm.

They also used more than \$90,000 as a down payment for a house in Malaysia, and for renovation work, between 2004 and 2007.

They got married in July 2007, and in October that year, they decided to end their trail of deceit before their luck ran out.

But a business review by the bank four months later detected unusual patterns in courier charges paid to Bushido.

"As a result of a further probe, the employee's misdeeds were discovered," said bank spokesman Koh Ching Ching in an e-mail yesterday.

The couple were arrested in April this year.

In addition to the 93 cheating charges, Ragamatthulla and Anita also admitted to nine counts of moving criminal proceeds out of the jurisdiction to Malaysia.

The couple's lawyer Subhas Anandan said that since their arrests, they had cooperated with police investigators. In a handwritten letter to District Judge Liew Thiam Leng, Anita asked for a shorter jail sentence as she wanted to guide her school-going children – aged 17, 16 and 13 – during a crucial phase in their lives.

Judge Liew allowed Anita's children and parents to talk to her for a few minutes before she was taken from the court.

Ragamatthulla's 60-year-old father, a mee goreng seller who had hired Mr Anandan and Mr Sunil Sudheesan to act for the couple, declined comment after the judgment was handed out.

Those convicted of cheating could be jailed for up to seven years for each offence and fined.