

# Ex-NKF chairman gets 15 months' jail

By **WEE LI-EN**

[SINGAPORE] Former National Kidney Foundation (NKF) chairman Richard Yong was sentenced to 15 months' jail yesterday after he pleaded guilty last week to three charges under the Bankruptcy Act and the Penal Code.

Yong admitted that he did not disclose three bank accounts to the authorities. The former banker also admitted that he did not disclose that he transferred his membership of The American Club and £1.27 million (S\$3.85 million) to his wife.

Judge Liew Thiam Leng said the sentence should reflect the gravity of the offence and aggravating factors including Yong's illegal flight from Singapore – to Hong Kong and Malaysia. Yong's lawyer Jeffrey Beh said he will try to meet his client by tomorrow to discuss what steps to take next. He also told the media that Yong was disappointed by the sentence, which he felt was harsh.

Yong could have been jailed for three years for each of the two charges he pleaded guilty to under the Bankruptcy Act. For the Penal Code charge he could have faced a two-year jail term.

Mr Beh said Yong had asked him to thank well-wishers. "There have even been people on the streets who have approached me to wish him well because now at least they get to hear part of his side of the story," Mr Beh said. "They know that he has not taken any money from NKF. They know that he has put in tremendous effort and part of his effort has built up NKF. There's still a lot of charity in his heart, you'll be surprised. His passion was NKF and still is."

The sentence yesterday is the latest development in a court battle that began two years ago when the NKF scandal broke. Yong was one of four former NKF board members who were sued by the organisation's new leadership in January this year for failing in their duties to the charity. He conceded defeat but failed to pay damages amounting to about \$900,000 and was made a bankrupt on May 16.

Yong skipped town with his wife the next morning to Malaysia without approval from the Official Assignee. He was arrested in Hong Kong on July 4, brought back to Singapore on Aug 3 and has since been on remand. His wife remains in Hong Kong on HK\$100,000 (S\$19,447) bail after she was charged with money laundering.