

# Two charged over rogue lawyer's gold

AMONG the expensive items fugitive lawyer David Rasif is believed to have bought before he fled the country are a large number of gold bars.

Two men were charged yesterday in connection with the missing gold.

One of them, Bernard Ong Ee Beng, 46, unemployed, is accused of concealing 28 gold bars in a flat in Kim Keat Avenue and another 19 in a Tampines flat. He allegedly did this in June last year, though he had reason to be suspicious about the gold bars, to help the 43-year-old runaway lawyer avoid prosecution.

He is also alleged to have conspired with the other man, Lye Thiam Hock, to dishonestly dispose of five gold bars.

Lye, 52, a consultant, is said to have hidden 19 gold bars at the Tampines flat to help Ong avoid prosecution on June 5 last year.

He is also accused of receiving stolen cash of \$27,000 on each of two occasions from the

sale of a gold bar each to a man called Liu Yuk Ming in June last year.

A fourth charge accuses Lye of conspiring with Ong between June 26 and July last year to dishonestly dispose of five gold bars. Lye had apparently sold five gold bars to Liu in July last year.

Under the Corruption, Drug Trafficking and Other Serious Crimes (Confiscation of Benefits) Act, the two men can be fined up to \$200,000 or jailed up to seven years or both on each charge.

The conspiracy charge is punishable with up to three years' jail or a fine or both.

Rasif, who is at large, is believed to have bought jewellery worth about \$2 million as well as gold bars before he left for Bangkok on June 5 last year.

Bail has been offered to Ong and Lye at \$30,000 and \$20,000 respectively. A pre-trial conference will be held next Friday.

**ELENA CHONG**