

Today, 09 October 2009

Two jailed for credit-card scam

SINGAPORE - For being part of an international counterfeit credit-card syndicate, two Taiwanese nationals were yesterday jailed for four years each after cheating two retailers of more than \$6,000.

Lin Ming-Hung, 24, and Huang Cheng-Yu, 22, were carefully taught how to react if card-reading machines were to detect something amiss, such as first offering another card, then informing sales staff they would return another time if a call was made to the bank. The two were also shown catalogues of Gucci, Prada and Louis Vutton to familiarise themselves with the items they could purchase. Still, their game was up after two purchases in the space of an hour.

At about 4.20pm on June 1, they bought a \$1,788 camera from a shop at VivoCity. An hour later, they bought a \$4,635 watch in Toa Payoh Central.

Both items were passed to a person named "Michael", and were never recovered. Minutes later, as they were about to make purchases at a nearby goldsmith shop, they were detained by bank officers alerted to fraudulent activities by the Card Security Group Singapore.

Lin and Huang had 14 counterfeit cards in their possession. Both pleaded guilty to three counts each of possessing counterfeit cards, and two counts each of abetment to cheat, with 11 charges each taken into consideration for sentencing.

Defence lawyer Loo Eng Teck said in mitigation that the duo had travelled from Taiwan to Malaysia after being told of a job opening. It was only in Malaysia that Huang became aware that their "job" involved purchasing items in Singapore using counterfeit cards.

The lawyer argued that the offenders were not stakeholders in the racket that planned the offences, and were naive. But Deputy Public Prosecutor Thomas Koshy argued that the two would surely have been suspicious of the supposed "job" offer, and District Judge Ch'ng Lye Beng ruled that it would be "naïve" to accept that they had no knowledge of their intended crime.