

Barrister and former legal executive face court for allegedly stealing HK\$70,000 from clients

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A barrister and a former legal executive of a solicitors firm, charged by the ICAC, today (Tuesday) appeared in the District Court for allegedly stealing and attempting to steal over HK\$70,000 from the wife of a defendant and a co-defendant of a deception case.

Valerie Lim Tin-tin, 42, barrister, and Ho Ying-pan, 48, former legal executive of Chong & Yen Solicitors (C&Y), pleaded not guilty to two joint charges of theft.

Lim further denied two counts of attempted theft, while Ho pleaded not guilty to three counts of using a false instrument.

Judge Stanley Chan adjourned the case to September 20 for trial, and granted Lim and Ho cash bail of \$100,000 and \$50,000 respectively.

The case arose from a corruption complaint. Subsequent ICAC enquiries revealed the above alleged offences.

Two of the charges alleged that Lim and Ho stole a total of US\$5,000 belonging to Vickie Smith.

Smith was the wife of Tochukwu Nwaneri, who was then charged by the Police for his alleged involvement in a deception case, while John Ryan was a co-defendant of the case.

Two other charges alleged Lim of attempting to steal a total of US\$4,000 belonging to Smith and Ryan.

The alleged offences took place between July 25 and September 6, 2007.

The remaining three charges alleged Ho of using three false authorisation letters bearing the letterhead of C&Y for the visits of Nwaneri and Ryan remanded at Lai Chi Kok Reception Centre on three occasions between July 24 and August 2, 2007, with the intention of inducing officers of the Correctional Services Department (CSD) to accept them as genuine.

The prosecution was today represented by Public Prosecutor Alvin Chui, assisted by ICAC officer Vincent Ling.

Meanwhile, Ho Ying-pan was also earlier charged by the ICAC with eight counts of using a false instrument and one of theft in another case.

Ho pleaded not guilty to the charges, and will appear in Eastern Magistracy for a pre-trial review on Thursday (April 22).

Eight of the charges alleged that Ho used false authorisation letters bearing the letterhead of C & Y for the visits of four persons remanded at Lai Chi Kok Reception Centre on eight occasions between September 23, 2006 and August 13, 2007, with the intention of inducing CSD officers to accept them as genuine.

The remaining charge alleged Ho of stealing about HK\$30,000 being the property of C & Y on April 26, 2007.