

A company manager was today (Tuesday) found guilty at the District Court of accepting \$800,000 in bribes from a former senior executive of the Centaline Property Agency Limited (Centaline) over the purchase of a \$240m industrial building.

Ho Wai-jon, 51, former general manager of Li & Fung (Trading) Limited, was convicted of one count of agent accepting an advantage, contrary to Section 9(1)(a) of the Prevention of Bribery Ordinance.

Also convicted in the same case were Poon Chi-ming, 44, former general manager of Centaline, who was found guilty of two counts of conspiracy to defraud; and Lau Sau-yu, 38, estate agent of Centaline, who was found guilty of a similar charge.

District Court Deputy Judge Albert Wong Sung-hau adjourned sentencing to June 17, 2008, pending background and community service orders reports.

Co-defendant Mark Chan Ngan-lau, 48, former general manager of Centaline, had earlier pleaded guilty to three counts of offering advantages and one count of conspiracy to defraud.

Chan had admitted having offered \$1.41m to Ho as rewards for commissioning Centaline as an agent in three property transactions.

The defendants were remanded in the custody of the Correctional Services Department, pending sentencing.

The court heard that Ho was assigned by Li & Fung Group in late 2005 to handle the company's property transactions, among which was the purchase of an industrial building on Cheung Sha Wan Road, a deal completed in June 2006 at \$240m.

Ho had accepted \$800,000 in bribes from Chan on August 11, 2006 as a reward for engaging Centaline as an agent in the transaction.

The court also heard that between March 8 and March 22, 2006, Poon and Lau had falsely represented to Centaline that Tommy Electric Company was entitled to a referral fee of \$331,707 for the purchase of The Aegean on Castle Peak Road in Tuen Mun.

Poon had also conspired with Chan Ngan-lau and another Centaline agent between September 26 and October 6, 2005 to make false representation to Centaline that Royal Regency Investment Limited was entitled to a referral fee of \$275,000 for the purchase of a property on Fa Yuen Street.

The court heard that both companies were not involved in the said transactions.

The prosecution was today represented by Wong Po-wing and assisted by ICAC officer Ben Chan.