

Singapore

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Screengrab from Google Street View of Lucky Plaza.



[Lydia Lam](#)

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SINGAPORE: Over nearly two years, a Singaporean man ran an illegal moneylending



He would meet them in person on Sundays in Orchard Road, at malls like Lucky Plaza, Takashimaya and ION Orchard, issuing cash loans between S\$300 and S\$500.

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Tan Boon Teck, 61, was sentenced on Wednesday (Nov 25) to two years and six weeks' jail and a fine of S\$240,000. If he cannot pay the fine, he will be jailed for another 16 weeks.

Tan pleaded guilty to eight charges involving S\$3,900 of illegal loans under the Moneylenders Act, with another 10 charges taken into consideration.

[READ: Borrowing, brokering, lending: Inside the tangled web of maids and moneylenders](#)

The court heard that he took over the illegal business from a Filipino acquaintance in July 2017, before roping in his Filipina maid girlfriend to help him.

His girlfriend, Shirley Cansino Eustaquio, helped to pass loans to debtors and collect repayments and was not paid for her role. She was given eight weeks' jail and a S\$60,000 fine last year and repatriated to the Philippines.



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He was known as "Uncle", "Kuya" or "Mr Bean" to his debtors, and obtained photocopies of their passports, work permits and contact details.

He charged an interest rate of 20 per cent per month and later changed the terms of his loan so that repayments of the loan and interest were made by monthly instalments and subject to a late payment fee.

He dealt with at least 10 debtors, all of whom were Filipino domestic workers, and operated primarily in Orchard Road at places where they frequented, said Deputy Public Prosecutor Pavithra Ramkumar.

He did not have a moneylending licence and knew it was illegal, but operated his business for nearly two years between July 2017 and May 2019.

Some of the debtors took up loans from Tan as they needed money for their families, including one woman who had to help pay for her granddaughter's medical expenses. She paid him S\$1,500 in total after approaching him for a S\$500 loan.

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Another maid took up four loans from Tan totalling S\$1,900 as she supported five people on a monthly salary of S\$700.

He was arrested on May 12 last year after a raid was conducted at his Bedok flat. Police seized S\$580 in cash, a phone and a stack of papers containing Tan's records of debtors.

[READ: Maids could turn to loansharks if employers' consent needed to borrow money from licensed moneylenders: MOM](#)

MASTERMIND TARGETING VULNERABLE WORKERS: PROSECUTOR

The prosecutor said Tan was the mastermind of the well-organised business and scolded and hurled vulgarities at debtors who failed to make repayment.

She asked for 30 months' jail and a fine of S\$240,000, saying that Tan targeted a vulnerable class of workers - maids who drew monthly salaries of S\$600 to S\$800.



His interest rate of 20 per cent was "exorbitant" and five times the maximum rate of interest of 4 per cent a month prescribed under the Moneylenders Rules 2009.

"Such interest would have been extortionate when viewed against the salaries of his debtors," said the prosecutor.

Tan's lawyer said the maids should have gone to banks for loans, and said Tan is the sole care provider for his wheelchair-bound mother. He added that it was "a bit far-fetched" to say it was a syndicated operation.

District Judge Marvin Bay said there is a need for the court to curb illegal moneylending, which is "an unquestionably lucrative activity where offenders hope to net enormous gains from relatively modest outlays of cash".

He noted that Tan disbursed loans to foreign domestic workers, who are a vulnerable class of people with limited means of obtaining credit and susceptible to exploitation.

For each charge of carrying on an illegal moneylending business, Tan could have been jailed for up to four years and fined between S\$30,000 and S\$300,000 per charge.

Source: CNA/II(cy)

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