

# Syndicate behind bogus claims worth \$40m



Ng Cheng Kwee, one of the alleged masterminds behind the scheme, is among the five Singaporeans who have been hauled to court in what has been labelled the biggest case of a public institution being defrauded. ST PHOTO: WONG KWAI CHOW

🕒 PUBLISHED DEC 20, 2017, 5:00 AM SGT

---

## Network of nine business entities used by syndicate for fraudulent SkillsFuture claims

---

Shaffiq Idris Alkhatib

---

A scheme aimed at promoting lifelong learning among Singaporeans allegedly became the target of a criminal syndicate that is said to have made bogus SkillsFuture claims totalling nearly \$40 million, before being caught out in October.

Five Singaporeans have been hauled to court in what has been labelled the biggest case, to date, of a public institution being defrauded.

The charges cover a wide range - from forging documents to obtain training subsidies, to concealing gains from criminal conduct in kilograms of gold, to trying to destroy evidence by throwing away mobile phones.

Yesterday, one of the alleged masterminds behind the scheme, Ng Cheng Kwee, 41, was charged with three counts of trying to pervert the course of justice.

Before this, starting from November, a series of charges were laid out against other members of the syndicate. Apart from Ng, the other men involved in the case are Lee Chi Wai, 30, and David Lim Wee Hong, 39. The syndicate also included two women - Lee Lai Leng, 39, and Tan Yoon Nooi, 59, the charges indicate.

SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG) - which oversees the SkillsFuture initiative - said yesterday that the syndicate had used a network of nine business entities to make the bogus claims, initial investigations showed. These included employer companies and training providers.

After nearly \$40 million in claims were paid out to this network, some anomalies came to light in October.

SSG said that at that point, it immediately suspended all payments of training grants to the nine entities and made a police report. A number of bank accounts were frozen and a large amount of cash was seized.

The five people charged are said to have committed their offences between April and last month. Among the forged documents submitted to SSG were those titled "Record of Payment", bearing the letterhead of the Central Provident Fund (CPF) Board. They are said to have shown CPF contributions made to the employees of various companies.

The purpose of these forged documents, according to the charges, was to get SSG to disburse course fee subsidies to these firms.

Earlier, Ng was charged with concealing benefits of criminal conduct - namely \$6.7 million in cash and 11kg of gold worth about \$600,000.

Over just three days, between Oct 29 and Nov 1, Lim is also said to have received about \$1.8 million from a certain Vincent Peter.

Ng, who was in China on Nov 1, is also accused of phoning Lee Lai Leng and asking her to throw away her mobile phone to destroy evidence of their dealings. He gave similar instructions to Lim, the court heard yesterday.

Lim, in turn, allegedly deleted his WhatsApp conversations and call logs with Ng and Lee Lai Leng. The next day, he is also said to have concealed about \$600,000 in cash in the vicinity of Greenleaf View near Holland Road.

Meanwhile, on Nov 1, Lee Lai Leng also allegedly told Lee Chi Wai to reformat his phone which contained evidence of their dealings. Lee Chi Wai is also said to have acquired 5kg of gold from People's Park Complex that same day, despite having grounds to believe that it represented "another person's benefits from

criminal conduct".

SSG said that after this incident, it has acted to tighten its processes, including implementing fraud analytics, while conducting a comprehensive review of the system.

Ng is now remanded at Central Police Division and will be back in court on Dec 26.

### **Unlock more articles at just \$0.99/month**

Subscribe to read all the stories you want today. Only \$0.99/month for the first 6 months\*.

[Subscribe Now](#)

- 
- › [Terms & Conditions](#)
  - › [Data Protection Policy](#)
  - › [Need help? Reach us here.](#)
  - › [Advertise with us](#)