

\$260,000 paid to bank chief during crisis

By EVA TO

THE Hongkong chief of the Bank of Credit and Commerce, Mr Tariq Jamil, received a \$260,000 golden handshake just one day before the bank was put into provisional liquidation.

He was one of a select few who had prior knowledge of the July 17 decision to liquidate.

Banking Commissioner Mr David Carse said the amount was, in fact, salary that had been due to Mr Jamil. But while he was able to receive his cash in full, it is uncertain whether other employees will be as fortunate.

Mr Jamil, who left for Pakistan two weeks ago, was expected to return to the territory and help wind up affairs at BCC, according to Mr Carse.

"Obviously I would prefer he hadn't gone. I have talked to my legal adviser. There was nothing I could do to stop him from leaving," explained Mr Carse, who last talked to Mr Jamil last week.

Despite allegations of widespread fraud in BCC's international affairs, Mr Carse yesterday re-affirmed his confidence in the people who ran the Hongkong operation.

"As head of the Banking Commission, the judgement was that the management was trustworthy," he said.

The management had been considered "fit and proper" by his predecessor,

Mr Anthony Nicolle, and Mr Carse had not seen any reason to revise that judgement.

Seconded from the Bank of England, Mr Carse became Banking Commissioner just 10 days before the BCC affair broke on July 5.

"Clearly, one of the things I have discussed with my officials and the auditors was the integrity of the management," Mr Carse explained.

"The conclusion was that the present management was regarded as fit and proper."

He believed Mr Nicolle had shared this view, citing his attempt to persuade Mr Jamil to stay on when the latter sought to resign in February.

"Mr Jamil wouldn't have been asked to stay on if we didn't think he was fit and proper," he said.

Mr Carse conceded he would not like to see senior executives of the bank resigning when affairs were still being sorted out, but said there was nothing he could do to stop them from doing so.

"These people can either go or stay. There's no criminal charges against them," he said.

Mr Mushtaque Ahmed and Mr Joseph Fang Kweison are the general managers and Mr Augustus Lee the assistant general manager.

Mr Fang was marketing manager at the Hongkong Bank until a few years ago.