

Sexual harassment: Man gets 17 years, 7 strokes

Published on: Wednesday, August 23, 2023

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Text Size:



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KOTA KINABALU: A 40-year-old man was sentenced to a total of 17 years and ordered given seven strokes of the cane for four counts of committing physical harassment against his wife's cousin. The man pleaded guilty before Sessions Court Judge Elsie Primus to all the charges against him on Tuesday. On the first count, the man was jailed three years plus a stroke of the cane for committing sexual abuse against the 16 years and three months-old girl by fondling her breasts and kissing her cheeks at 4am on July 18 this year at a bedroom of a house in Kota Marudu. On the second count, he was sentenced to four years' jail plus two strokes of the cane for committing a similar offence by causing the same victim to touch his private parts for sexual purpose at the same place and time. On the third count, the man was sent to prison for four years and ordered to get two strokes of the cane for repeating the offence against the same victim by sucking her breasts and kissing her lips at 10.30pm on July 24 this year at the same place. On the fourth count, he was jailed six years plus two strokes of the cane for committing the offence again by causing the same victim to touch his private parts for sexual purpose at the same place and time as the third count. The offence under Section 14(a) of the Sexual Offences Against Children Act 2017 provides for a jail term of up to 20 years and whipping, on conviction. The court ordered the man to serve the jail sentence consecutively. During mitigation, the man who was not represented, asked for leniency and forgiveness for his wrongdoing. He told the court that he regretted his offence.

However, Deputy Public Prosecutor Tham Pou Jin urged the court to impose a heavy sentence as a matter of public interest. Tham submitted that the court should consider the rampancy of the case and seriousness of offence. The court also ordered the man to undergo rehabilitative counseling within the period of his detention and thereafter placed under police supervision for a period of three years after serving sentence. The court heard that the man was arrested following a police report lodged by the victim's father after his daughter revealed the incidents. Investigation revealed that the man who was the husband of the victim's cousin, was living near the victim's house and went to the house and committed the offences against the victim. His appearance in the victim's house during the incident, was not noticed by other family members. When the father visited the victim and her siblings, then the incident came to light as the victim revealed it. The victim remembered the dates of incidents because she wrote them in a book.