



Cheung and Seow are escorted by prison guards outside after proceedings. — Photo by Hafizah Abdul Hamid

Apex court dismisses couple's final appeal in Sibu suitcase murder


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KUCHING: The Federal Court here has dismissed the final appeal by a Klang Valley couple convicted of murdering 38-year-old Heng Heow Lin in Sibu in 2020, upholding their death sentences.

Seow Pei Chie, 44, and her husband Cheung Chai Ming, 44, had earlier failed in their appeal at the Court of Appeal on March 10 this year to overturn their convictions and death sentences imposed by Sibu High Court judge Datuk Christopher Chin on July 31, 2023.

A three-member Federal Court panel led by Chief Judge of Sabah and Sarawak Dato Sri Azizah Nawawi, together with Dato Rhodzariah Bujang and Dato Collin Lawrence Sequerah,

unanimously dismissed the couple's final appeal against their convictions and death sentences.

The panel found, among other things, that the totality of the evidence, including forensic evidence and the circumstances surrounding the disposal of the victim's body, was sufficient to establish the guilt of both appellants.

The court also agreed with the lower courts that the act of placing a suicide note was a deliberate attempt to mislead the authorities and create an alternative narrative.

The apex court further agreed with the High Court's finding that the note did not genuinely reflect the victim's state of mind, given that the injuries on her body were inconsistent with suicide.

On sentencing, the court said that although the mandatory death penalty had been abolished through amendments to the law in 2023, courts retained the discretion to impose either

the death penalty or life imprisonment in appropriate cases.

"We unanimously find that, given the aggravated nature of the murder offence and the circumstances in which it was committed, the death sentences imposed on both appellants are justified," the court said in its judgment.

Seow, from Subang Jaya, Selangor, and her husband Cheung, from Jalan Tun Sambanthan, Kuala Lumpur, were charged with causing Heng's death between 10pm on Oct 4, 2020 and 6am on Oct 6, 2020 at a house on Jalan Tong Sang, Sibu.

The victim's body was subsequently stuffed into a suitcase and dumped along Jalan Aman, Sibu before being discovered by members of the public at around 6.30am on Oct 6, 2020.

The charge was brought under Section 302 of the Penal

Code read together with Section 34 of the same Code, which provides for the death penalty or imprisonment for a term of not less than 30 years and not exceeding 40 years.

If the death penalty is not imposed, the convicted person is also liable to receive not fewer than 12 strokes of the cane.

It is understood that the victim and her daughter had moved from Perak to Sibu in March 2016 and lived with the appellants.

The victim is understood to have borrowed money from the appellants but faced difficulties repaying the debt, resulting in her and her daughter allegedly being subjected to frequent verbal and physical abuse.

Cheung and Seow were represented by court-appointed lawyers Jong Yee Ling and Dato Candida Entri respectively, while the prosecution, as respondent, was represented by deputy public prosecutor Allan Suman Pillai.