

# Molest: Religious teacher freed

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*He was charged under Sections 14(a) and 14(d) of the Sexual Offences Against Children Act 2017, which carries a prison sentence of up to 20 years and caning, if convicted.*

**KOTA KINABALU:** A religious school teacher who was charged with two counts of committing physical sexual assault against an 11-year-old female pupil was on Wednesday freed of the charges by the Sessions Court here. Mohd Zakri Amirsah, 30, was discharged and acquitted of the charges by Judge Amir Shah Amir Hassan without his defence being called. The judge in delivering his ruling, held that the prosecution failed to prove a prima facie case against Zakri. Zakri was accused of committing the offences at the school in March 2022 and January 2023. He was charged under Sections 14(a) and 14(d) of the Sexual Offences Against Children Act 2017, which carries a prison sentence of up to 20 years and caning, if convicted. The two charges are read together with Section 16(c) of the Sexual Offences Against Children Act 2017 which carries an additional sentence of imprisonment of up to five years and not less than two strokes of the cane. Zakri, who claimed trial to the charges on Feb 24, 2023, was on a court bail of RM5,000 on each charge. The prosecution had called six witnesses to testify during the trial. Zakri was represented by counsel Mohamad Syazwan Shah Mohamad Ali, Nigel Neong Kaning and Hannan Razaini.

Meanwhile, a 46-year-old man, who has three conviction records of taking syabu and amphetamine, was sentenced to seven years' jail and three lashes of the cane for a similar offence. Shaharul Manaf pleaded guilty before Sessions Court Judge Elsie Primus to committing the offence here on Jan 17, this year at 7.10am. The charge against Shaharul also stated that he had one conviction under Section 39C(1) of the Dangerous Drugs Act (DDA) 1952 committed in 2019 and two convictions under Section 15(1)(a) of the same Act, committed in 2011 and 2018. Shaharul had committed an offence under Section 39C(2) of the same Act, which carries a jail term of between seven years and 13 years and whipping not less than three times, on conviction.