Prosecution presses for at least 2 years' jail, caning for Briton who molested toddler at learning centre

Richard Christopher Monks is now out on $5,000 bail and will be sentenced on March 3. ST PHOTO: KELVIN CHNG

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SINGAPORE - The prosecution has urged a district court to sentence a British man, <u>convicted of molesting a toddler in Singapore,</u> to at least two years' jail with four strokes of the cane.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Nicholas Khoo told District Judge Chee Min Ping on Wednesday (Feb 3) that the offender, Richard Christopher Monks, 29, had "intruded" an "intimate part" of the three-year-old girl's body.
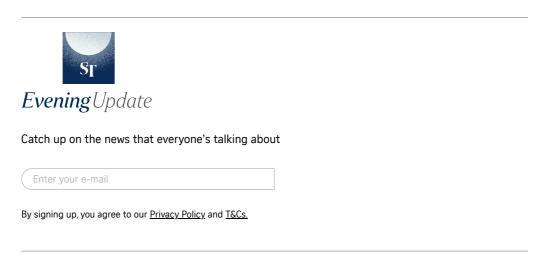
The DPP also stressed that Monks, who was then working as a reading specialist in a learning centre, had "abused the trust reposed in him" and made the child the target of his "sick" act of molestation.

In his mitigation plea, Defence lawyer <mark>Patrick Fernandez</mark> asked for his client to be sentenced to a year's jail with two strokes of the cane.

He told Judge Chee: "Richard committed the offence in a momentary lapse of judgement owing to work-related stress and anxiety. Prior to the incident, Richard had informed his supervisor that he was having trouble sleeping and she advised him to see a doctor."

The court heard that on Dec 20, 2018, Monks was prescribed antidepressant Sertraline for anxiety and Xanax, a tranquilliser, for insomnia.

Monks is now out on $5,000 bail and will be sentenced on March 3.

On Monday, he pleaded guilty to outraging the three-year-old girl's modesty in his class on Oct 20, 2018.

Closed-circuit television (CCTV) footage taken from the classroom and played in court earlier this week showed him rearranging some chairs for a video-watching session at around 5.18pm that day.

There were six children in the classroom at the time and the victim was the youngest. The others were between four and five years old.

Aware that there was a camera installed in one corner of the classroom, recording footage from a certain angle, Monks positioned himself behind the children so that he was directly opposite the CCTV camera.

As a result, the children's upper bodies blocked the camera's view of his hands.

"The lower half of the (pupils') bodies would also not be captured from such an angle," said DPP Tan Hsiao Tien on Monday.

From the footage, Monks was seen positioning himself behind the victim as he played a video on his mobile phone for the children to watch. The children then leaned over a table to view the phone screen.

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The footage showed Monks repeatedly lifting the victim's pink dress and caressing her buttocks with his left hand. She turned around repeatedly to look at him while he committed the offence.

Monks was also seen using his right hand to hold another mobile phone close to the victim's buttocks, pointing it up her skirt.

"The victim was uncomfortable with the accused's touch, and expressed her discomfort by fidgeting and turning back to look at him several times during the said duration," said DPP Tan.

"Despite (her) discomfort, the accused continued to touch and caress her buttocks."

The offence came to light on Oct 27, 2018 as the girl's parents were preparing to take her to the learning centre for lessons. The child was reluctant to go.

When asked why, she said that "teacher Richard", had "touched her" and pointed to her buttocks.
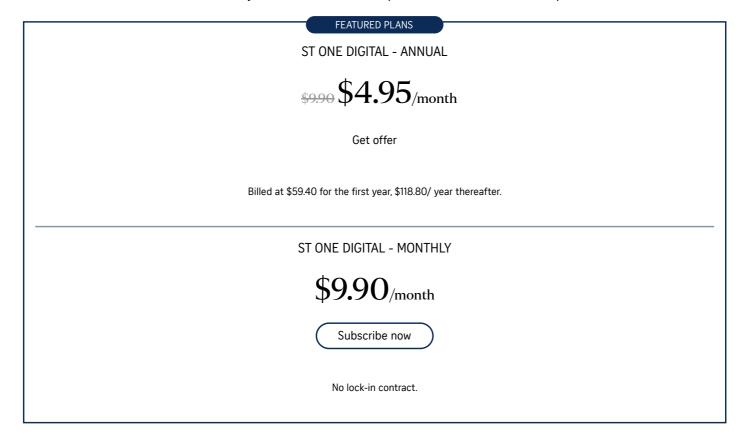
Her mother alerted the police later that day and stopped sending her daughter to the centre. Police arrested Monks on Nov 1, 2018, shortly after he returned to Singapore from a trip to Thailand.

For molesting a child below 14 years old, an offender can be jailed for up to five years and fined or caned.

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