

THE STRAITS TIMES

Retiree acquitted of attempting to procure indecent act from underage girl



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SINGAPORE - He had to endure months of sleepless nights but on Tuesday (Sept 18), a 65-year-old retiree heaved a sigh of relief after he was acquitted of attempting to procure an indecent act with an underage girl.

In an exclusive interview with The Straits Times on Wednesday, Mr Jamalludin Abdullah, who was charged with the offence in March, said in Malay: "The past few months have been extremely difficult as my worries kept me awake. I also had no appetite to eat.

"I'm overjoyed and relieved that it's all over as I had been accused of a crime I did not commit."

Mr Jamalludin, who has four adult daughters and 11 grandchildren, was accused of repeatedly asking a 15-year-old girl to have sex with him while patting her back and holding her hand at a staircase landing of a Punggol Central block of flats at around 5am on Jan 21 last year.

The girl was linked to a case involving an Uber driver who was jailed for 14 months in May for having sex with her that morning.

Isyam Rahmat, who Mr Jamalludin had treated like a younger brother, was aware that the teenage runaway was a minor but that did not deter the 36-year-old man from having sex with her.

Isyam had picked the girl up while driving on Jan 20 last year after she phoned him at around 4pm that day.



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Mr Jamalludin told ST that he had dinner with the pair later that evening before heading home.

Isyam had unprotected sex with the girl at a staircase landing of Mr Jamalludin's block at around 4am the next day.

The retiree said: "I only found out about what Isyam had done when police came to my home to look for me. I was shocked as I did not touch the girl at all. And as for Isyam, I didn't expect that he could commit such an act. But I have already forgiven him a long time ago."

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Mr Jamalludin said that his family members stood by him after he was charged in court because they knew that he was wrongly accused of committing the offence.

He added: "I'm an old man and I don't have sexual urges anymore. I'm truly thankful for my lawyers **Mr Patrick Fernandez** and Ms Cheryl Tan for helping me these past six months."

Mr Fernandez told ST on Tuesday that prior to the acquittal, he sent Mr Jamalludin to undergo a medical examination and a doctor found that the elderly man has erectile dysfunction.

The lawyer added: "Due to his condition, it was unlikely that my client was able to commit the offence."

First-time offenders convicted of attempting to procure an indecent act from a child can be jailed for up to five years and fined up to \$10,000. Repeat offenders can be jailed for up to seven years and fined up to \$20,000.

The Attorney-General's Chambers told ST on Thursday that the prosecution withdrew the charge against the accused before the matter could go to trial as the girl was no longer available to testify and this resulted in the acquittal.

A stern warning was issued in lieu of prosecution before the charge was withdrawn.

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