

Court reduces sentence for robber with low IQ

A MENTALLY retarded young man with a string of petty crimes under his belt escaped caning and jail after a court reduced his robbery sentence to reformatory training.

In February, Emmanuel Munisamy, 20, was sentenced to eight years and three months in jail for two counts of robbery and hurting a police officer. On Dec 4 last year, Emmanuel and another youth, using a penknife, had robbed a boy of his wallet and headset. A month later, Emmanuel and another friend had robbed a maid of her handphone and purse.

The district judge, who did not know Emmanuel has a low IQ of 66, also ordered him to be caned 24 times.

In an appeal hearing yesterday, Deputy Public Prosecutor Christina Koh said Emmanuel was a “ring leader” in the robberies and to allow him to serve in the reformatory training centre (RTC) would be a “slap on the wrist”.

“There is a difference between study smart and street smart,” said Ms Koh of his IQ level. Even though Emmanuel was not a “scholar”, he was not a “drooling idiot”, she added.

According to court papers, last year’s robberies were not Emmanuel’s first brush with the law. In 2000, the stocky youth was put in a juvenile home for two years for theft, while five years later, he was jailed two weeks for using threatening words towards a public servant.

“Just because he has low IQ does not give him a magic card that whisks him out of prison,” said Ms Koh. “I don’t see how he will change much from (reformatory training).”

Disagreeing, Emmanuel’s lawyer S K Kumar said the professionals who assessed his client were confident Emmanuel is capable of “treading the right path”.

Mr Kumar also produced a “care plan” to help Emmanuel after his release.

Emmanuel’s former teacher, Ms Linda Pereira, who is now the vice-principal of special school, the Rainbow Centre, has agreed to supervise him, help him find a job and keep him engaged in sports.

After hearing arguments from both sides yesterday, Justice V K Rajah set aside the jail term and caning, and ordered Emmanuel to serve reformatory training instead. He will spend the next 18 months to three years in the RTC, getting a stab at rehabilitation through a tough regime of foot-drills, counselling, education and vocational training.

Justice Rajah said: “I do not agree that retribution outweighs public interests in rehabilitating the appellant.” — ANSLEY NG

Amid furore, Odex changes tack

Firm will seek ISPs’ help to send out warning letters

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EMBATTLED anime distributor Odex — facing scores of Netizens in a cyber piracy spat — has changed tack to discourage people from downloading the Japanese cartoon videos.

The company said yesterday that it would send warning letters through Internet service providers (ISP) SingNet, Pacific Internet (PacNet) and StarHub to stop people from downloading and sharing the videos.

Odex’s director Stephen Sing said he hoped the ISPs would agree to work with his

company in passing on the notices to users who rip content.

“They don’t have any statutory obligations to do so, but we hope they could help,” he said.

The company has approached StarHub and would soon meet officials from the other two ISPs, he said.

A StarHub spokesman said the company had not “formally” heard from Odex. “We will respond accordingly when we receive more details,” he added.

A PacNet spokesman said the company would only comply with “properly obtained court orders”.

“PacNet respects and protects the confidentiality of our customers,” he said.

A SingNet spokesman said the telco was aware of the need

to protect both intellectual property rights and the privacy of subscribers.

“Content owners have a right to protect their property. But ISPs cannot step into commercial disputes, nor are they in a position to judge the legal merits of each and every case,” he said.

“It is also important that customers need to be aware of their legal rights and to seek necessary legal assistance to protect their interests,” the spokesman added.

After successfully getting SingNet and StarHub to hand over names of subscribers — many of them teens who are accused of ripping content, Odex tripped after a court threw out its application against PacNet.

The company’s appeal will

be heard on Oct 3.

Mr Sing said the latest move was targeted at parents who are subscribers with the ISPs and do not know their children have been downloading content illegally.

So far, Odex has met some 200 SingNet subscribers — names it obtained from the earlier successful court cases.

“We want parents to look into how their accounts were being abused by their children and I think they will understand the liabilities and dangers behind it,” said Mr Sing.

If the ISPs refuse to help, Odex would continue taking the legal route and asking downloaders to “talk to us”, said Mr Sing.

“We simply don’t have any other alternatives,” he said.

Enforcement Results		Jan to June 2007	Jan to June 2006
Number of duty-unpaid cigarettes seized (in packets)		\$2.5 million	\$2.3 million
Total Duty and GST involved		\$18.8 million	\$17.5 million
Number of people caught	Number of people arrested and charged in court	653 ↑ 28%	509
	Number of people with offences compounded	11,036 ↑ 206%	3,601

SOURCE: SINGAPORE CUSTOMS

The arm of the law isn’t coming down hard just on peddlers and smugglers of contraband cigarettes, but also on their customers.

Just in the first six months of this year, 3,084 buyers were booked — a four-fold increase over the same period last year. For each packet of duty-unpaid cigarettes they were caught with, they faced a composition sum of at least \$200.

The number of peddlers nabbed also grew 20 per cent to 456 this year.

The total number of offenders caught was 11,689 — more than the 9,267 nabbed for the whole of last year, the Singapore Customs reported.

One such offender was a retiree who used his life savings to stockpile contraband cigarettes for illegal sale. A raid on his flat turned up 76,000 packets. He was jailed for 34 months.

Customs officers also foiled 96 cases involving more than 10,000 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes smuggled by syndicates.

In the latest case last Friday, Immigration and Checkpoints Authority officers stopped a vegetable-filled truck at the Woodlands Checkpoint and found 130,000 sticks of contraband cigarettes hidden under the modified floorboard.

The Malaysian driver, aged 33, was arrested.

\$1.6m from NTUC to help low-income members pay bills

HELP is at hand for lower-income members of the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) — who are grappling with the rising cost of living.

The NTUC has set aside \$1.6 million for its Care and Share fund this year to take some burden off its needy members’ utility bills and transportation expenses.

Of the total fund, \$1.45 million will be in the form of \$50 direct payment to Singapore Power Services to help pay for the utility bills of those who qualified under the NTUC Care and Share (Utilities) offset package.

To qualify for this, a union member must have a household income of less than \$1,800, or a per capita income of not more than \$500.

The rest of the fund has been set aside to provide \$30 NTUC Care and Share (Public Transport) vouchers for those who do not have at least one family member who is a Singaporean.

Applicants must also have a household income of less than \$1,500, or per capita income of not more than \$450.

Applications for these aid packages can be made through the unions or through the NTUC from today until Sept 28. For more inquiries, call NTUC Hotline 6213 8008.

SINGAPORE SNIPPETS

SELANGOR POULTRY BAN LIFTED

Singapore is lifting the suspension on imports of poultry and poultry products from Selangor with immediate effect. The Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) visited Selangor recently to evaluate the surveillance and biosecurity systems put in place by Malaysia’s Department of Veterinary Services to keep out bird flu.

Singapore imposed the ban in June

following an outbreak of the H5N1 virus in chickens in Selangor. On Sept 9, Malaysia declared it was free from bird flu, in line with international guidelines that state a country can do so 90 days after the culling and disinfection of the last case.

The AVA said imports from Selangor constitute about 6 per cent of the eggs and 1 per cent of the poultry imports from Malaysia. — CHANNEL NEWSASIA

MAN HOSPITALISED AFTER FIRE

Just days after a fire gutted provision shops in a Hougang shop, killing two siblings, another fire broke out at a shop unit in Block 308, Clementi Avenue 4 at about 5.15 yesterday. The fire, which was confined to a small area in the shop, was quickly brought under control by Singapore Civil Defence Force officers. One man was rescued and was hospitalised for smoke inhalation.

DIABETICS KNOW OF FLU RISKS, BUT ...

More than 80 per cent of Singaporeans with diabetes know of the higher risk of their contracting influenza and related complications. Yet, nearly 70 per cent of respondents were not vaccinated against the flu. This was revealed in a survey of more than 300 Singaporeans with diabetes, commissioned by the Diabetic Society of Singapore. More than 8 per cent of adults here have diabetes.